

NEGOTIATING MODERNITY IN THE NOVELS OF
SHASHI DESHPANDE

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BY

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Declaration of Originality

I declare that the thesis entitled ‘Negotiating Modernity in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande’ has been prepared by me under the guidance of Dr. Soumyajit Samanta, Professor of Department of English, University of North Bengal. No part of the thesis has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

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Abstract

The term 'tradition' is a comprehensive one and is inclusive of all social conventions, norms, cultural practices, faiths and beliefs, familial and familiar relationships. The ever imposing burden of traditional authority often succeeds in creating a sense of rebellion against the cumulative forces of oppression and injustice to women. Shashi Deshpande strives to uphold the idea that women must try to overcome their suppressed roles. Her novels depict strong women protagonists who refuse to get crushed and give in to the weight of their personal tragedies, and face life with great courage and strength.

The objective of my study is to analyze Shashi Deshpande's novels placing them in social and realistic perspective. The studies done so far mainly focus on Shashi Deshpande either from a postcolonial point of view or discuss them from a feminist standpoint. But I have tried to look into these novels from a different point altogether. The conflict between conventional social norms and modern thought is placed together to bring out the radical development of the worldview regarding age old customs and social norms. Deshpande seeks to find solutions for problems of women and children within the familial framework and does not preach any abolition of institutions. Yet her approach to social problems and long nurtured rituals force us to consider human relationship and the progressive journey to modernity in a new light.

I have chosen mainly seven novels written by Shashi Deshpande for my in depth study of her views. The first three novels – *That Long Silence*, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *Roots and Shadows* represent Deshpande's early novels. On the other hand the other four novels I have chosen for my research work, namely, *A Matter of Time*, *The Binding Vine*, *Small Remedies* and *Moving On* are taken as her representative novels of later writing. While the first three are written during the eighties and early nineties; the other four are written during two decades, late nineties and beginning of the new century. As a whole, these seven novels successfully present before us a journey from traditional mindset to modernity both in individual level and in social sphere. Two exceptions are Chapters III and IV which refer mainly to two other novels, *Come Up and Be Dead* and *If I Die Today*. These chapters provide an insight into the social problems and ways of negotiating tradition and reaching out to modernity from Shashi Deshpande's point of view.

I have tried to analyze Shashi Deshpande's works in the light of negotiation with modernity. Understanding of Deshpande's protagonists and their problems has been enriched by Max Weber's ideas about modernity and his particular reference to the Indian perspective. Weber's view about modernity is coupled with rationality, scientific thinking, disenchantment, tiredness with many options etc. All these pros and cons of modernity are well traced in the works of Shashi Deshpande.

It also has to be remembered that Deshpande's stand as part of historical situation and her effort to highlight the particular reality has enabled us to understand her works in terms of Fredric Jameson's views on modernity. Jameson considers an author as a part of historical reality and the works of an author always reveal some repressed truth of history. In Deshpande's novels, references to the 1984 riots and China – India war are instances to that point. The ground reality comes alive through her beautiful character portrayal.

An effort has also been made to look into the horizon of critical study done till date on Shashi Deshpande. Anthologies that have essays on Deshpande, books that are solely written on Deshpande and scholarly articles published in periodicals and journals are discussed.

A critical analysis of the social problems still persistent in Indian society as revealed in the novels of Shashi Deshpande has been attempted. Deshpande's characters highlight the problems generally neglected so far and try to address those problems in their own way. While taking the road towards modernity, social mindset and traditional barriers come in between. Deshpande does not believe in avoiding such problems, rather she confronts them and opens new dimensions through her novels.

Religion, caste system, superstitions and such other social phenomenon try to strangle the development of the society. But education of women and their active participation in social and political movements act as a catalyst in

overcoming the social impediments which hinder the advance towards modernity.

Therefore, it is considered important to introspect the question of negotiating modernity in three early novels of Shashi Deshpande, namely, *That Long Silence*, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *Roots and Shadows*. The heroines in these novels try to establish their own identity by their unending struggle with forces, hostile to modernity. The portrayal of gender specific problems, fight for one's own space continues with special reference to Shashi Deshpande's four later novels – *A Matter of Time*, *The Binding Vine*, *Small Remedies* and *Moving On*. The protagonists in these novels go beyond the society drawn boundary and establish their strong footmark.

The effort to understand the world of children and to protect or guide them properly is a prerequisite of a modernist society. But in India generally, it is either overlooked or neglected. Deshpande's novels shed light upon this darkened area and discuss the issues quite freely. An analysis has been done to understand the typical problems of urban middle class families in respect of this generation gap.

Through this thesis an attempt has been made to answer all research questions or issues raised through the study. The journey towards a modern society demands abolition of all types of inequality and oppression. Harmonious life in society and discarding traditional barriers can herald a new social set up.

Preface

Modernity marks a paradigm shift in human thinking and human relations that brought in the emergence of modern science, technology, nation – states, capitalism, and industrialism across the societies thus producing unprecedented socio – economic – political conditions that have drastically restructured human lives. Fundamentally, modernity is the post – traditional way of being. The modern women in Shashi Deshpande’s novels are left confused between the conflicting forces of tradition and modernity. Reconciliation between personal aspirations and duties towards family and society becomes a challenge for them. Her novels deal with women’s sensibility, their sufferings, their aspirations and their struggle to rise above all the oppressive forces in a male dominated society.

This thesis is an attempt to briefly characterize the complex phenomenon of modernity through the novels of Shashi Deshpande, namely *If I Die Today*, *Come Up and Be Dead*, *That Long Silence*, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *Roots and Shadows*, *A Matter of Time*, *The Binding Vine*, *Small Remedies and Moving On*.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations

<i>BCL</i>	Bachelor of Civil Law
<i>B.Sc.</i>	Bachelor of Science
<i>BV</i>	The Binding Vine
<i>CP</i>	Communist Party
<i>CUBD</i>	Come Up and Be Dead
<i>DHNT</i>	The Dark Holds No Terror
<i>ETC</i>	Et cetra
<i>FRCS</i>	Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons
<i>IAS</i>	Indian Administrative Service
<i>IIT</i>	Indian Institute of Technology
<i>INA</i>	Indian National Army
<i>MBBS</i>	Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery
<i>MD</i>	Doctor of Medicine
<i>MO</i>	Moving On
<i>MT</i>	A Matter of Time
<i>NGO</i>	Non Government Organisation
<i>OBC</i>	Other Backward Classes

<i>PT</i>	Physical Training
<i>RS</i>	Roots and Shadows
<i>SACK</i>	Students against Competition and Kickbacks
<i>SC</i>	Scheduled Caste
<i>ST</i>	Scheduled Tribe
<i>SR</i>	Small Remedies
<i>SSC</i>	Staff Selection Commission
<i>TB</i>	Tuberculosis
<i>TLS</i>	That Long Silence
<i>LLB</i>	Bachelor of Laws
<i>YE</i>	Youth for Equality
<i>UK</i>	United Kingdom
<i>UNESCO</i>	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<i>USA</i>	United States of America

List of Appendices

APPENDIX A: Roy, Amitabh. “The Dark Holds Terrors Also! An Analysis of Social Problems of India as Revealed in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande” in *New Academia: An International Journal of English Language, Literature and Literary Theory*. 3: 3 (July 2014): 1-19. Print and Online

**Negotiating Modernity in the Novels of
Shashi Deshpande**

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION
EXPLORING MODERNITY – CONTESTING IDEAS

Modernity symbolises a world made out of active and purposive intervention of human beings along with the realisation and responsibility brought in with such an intervention. The modern society is the creation of human beings, the experience of which heralds a sense of freedom and endless possibilities of a brighter future. This new idea of freedom brought in with modernity involves time consciousness. Time here means a duration which is ever changing and looks towards the future than the past. The individual of this modern society considers himself/herself not only as a creator of this society but also as a person with a vision for the future. Modernity is characterized as being flexible and open as opposed to the traditional society bound by rigidity and static structures.

Max Weber, thinker of the modern era identified modernity with the growth of objective knowledge and scientific thinking. Weber's modern society is symbolized by individual interaction of its members instead of a conservative form of social organization. Thus, modernity brings with it a scope for various forms of human expressions through social interaction. For him modernity meant "new possibilities for the expression of human subjectivity."

“Weber sums up the particular problematic character of contemporary reality under the title ‘rationality’.” (Rundell 2013: 15)

Max Weber believes that modern societies are an array of contesting ideas, notions and powers. Weber seems to have two related aspects in mind. The first being the fall of the pre – modern world characterized by moral, cognitive and interpretative unity. This phenomenon has resulted in the retreat of ultimate and sublime values from human life. Secondly, Weber’s idea of modernity looks at every thing as capable of explaining with reference to logic and scientific belief. Therefore, religious understanding of the world becomes somewhat backward and superstitious from the modernist perspective. For Weber, modernity is characterized by rational actions, rules and science rather than rules and orders governed by traditionality. The modern society in the words of Weber is characterized by

“bureaucratization, rationalization, intellectualization, and the disenchantment of the world.” [Weber 1946: 155]

Weber’s position on modernity has often been termed ‘cultural pessimism’. He is considered to be representative of the pessimistic face of modernity.

“The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the ‘disenchantment of the

World'. Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations." (Weber 1946:155)

Weber's cultural pessimism is arguably counterbalanced, however, by his focus on other aspects of modern society, such as individual independence, increasing subjectivity, and freedom, all of which might be valued rather than repented, and all of which are made possible under the umbrella of modern pluralistic society.

The present day lifestyle with its endless demands leaves modern man entangled in an anxious state of mind. A never ending choice is always at his fingertip leading him towards an alienated position. The lack of something definite at the centre of the soul forces us to search for immediate gratification in ever new stimulations, sensations and external activities. Thus, man entangles himself in the instability and helplessness that manifests itself as the mania for wild pursuit of competition and as the typically modern disloyalty with regard to taste, style, options and personal relationships.

"We should strive for freedom and dignity, even at the expense of our happiness." [Weber, M. 1975:306]

"Dignity is the structuring of existence by a moral obligation and the readiness to renounce on its behalf." [Weber, M. 1975:364]

The novels of Shashi Deshpande depict a psychological journey into the minds of urban middle – class educated Indian women standing at the cross roads of tradition. The women protagonists of the novels of Shashi Deshpande clamor for change but within the accepted social structure. They do not want to tread into the path of reinterpreting their roles. Their only desire is to lead a life of dignity and self respect within their anchorage in married lives. Like, Jaya in *That Long Silence* is symbolic of sacrifice motivated by her desire to establish her dignity and identity approved by a patriarchal social set up. In spite of her efforts to portray herself as a perfect woman and mother she finds herself lonely and estranged. Jaya is representative of Weber's 'modern man' who is perennially alone with all options in hand but becomes tired with so many choices.

Weber's idea of social action, as found in *Economy and Society* (1978) links the question of passing into modernity with tradition. For Weber human action is social in so far as "the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to it." (ES 77) Social action may be influenced by the action of past, present and future. Therefore, it is a result or a modification of some action of other person or persons. Social action presupposes the existence of other individual and some action by him. This means there can be no social action in isolation. Therefore social action is possible if there is another human being whose action or behaviour is prompting the individual to act in a particular manner.

Mere behaviour becomes action when it involves interaction with others and when it assumes meaning; that is 'oriented in its course'. The basic requirement is the awareness of the actor regarding his action which can be interpreted in terms of their intentions, implications, motives and feelings as they are experienced.

Actions are termed traditional when their ends and means are fixed by customs and social norms. Being habitual it is taken for granted. In his four fold classification of social action, the last one is traditional action which is fixed by customs and traditions. Such action is habitual in nature. The typical problem of Deshpande's protagonists remains the inner conflict between surrendering attitude to tradition and rebellion against social set up. What pre modern man considered destiny or fate, is for the modern man a probability or a matter of choice. Destiny, hence, gets transformed into decision.

Such traditional action leads Indu, the heroine of *Roots and Shadows* (1992) to lament,

“This is my real sorrow, that I can never be complete in myself.”

(RS 47)

Indu left her home at the age of eighteen to get married according to her choice. This action represented her as a harbinger of new generation who reviews everything with reason and new vision. She explains the ideals of

detachment and liberation and tries to achieve them. However, unfortunately enough she fails. In spite of Jayant, her husband, failing to live up to her expectation and betraying her hopes for harmony, peace and happiness she fails in her attempts of liberation. Inability to enfranchise the traditional background in which she is reared forces Indu to believe that she cannot be complete without Jayant.

“Now I dress the way I want. As I please.’ As I please? No, that’s not true. When I look in the mirror, I think of Jayant. When I dress, I think of Jayant. When I undress, I think of him. Always what he wants. What he would like. What would please him? And I can’t blame him.... It’s the way I want it to be.” (RS 49)

Weber talks about various stages of social action and emotional stage is one of its components. It seems to be the emotional response to actions, done by others. We express our joy, happiness, love, sympathy, hatred etc in response to some specific occasions. Likewise, the traditional stage is known for the likings of long nurtured norms, customs and set pattern of the society. In the words of Raymond Aron, Weber’s view is the paradigm of a sociology which is both historical and systematic.

Weber’s problem with modernity takes us to the fact that it needed a historically unique galaxy of social norms and cultural notions.

“Cultural values can reject an ethic, just as an ethic can reject cultural values.” [Weber 1949c: 15]

In a Weberian sense, significant social change will occur if and when there is perceived correlation among class, status, and power. Individuals practice, as Weber put it, a "specific style of life [that] ... is not subservient to economic ... purposes." Weber notes that self-imposed class rules "may confine normal marriages within the status circle..." (cited in Bendix, 1977, p. 86).

In other words, people's perception regarding hierarchy of groups in a stratified society is bound to question the legitimacy of the whole system rather than just one part. The increasing or decreasing need for 'routinization' will be affected as a result of the degree of social change. This 'routinization', Weber argues, will in the long run lead to a kind of stratification that again sets up the conditions for conflict and change. For Weber, social systems are nothing but a cyclical process moving incessantly through routinization and charismatic change.

The religion of India, especially the ethos of Hinduism was criticized by Weber mainly because he found that the ideas of 'Dharma', 'Karma' and 'punarjanma' made Indians defeatists and fatalists. Ancient India made valuable contributions to science and trade links, however, the caste system held them back. Weber believes that caste system works as an unavoidable part in the lives of Hindus and they become entangled in it. Efforts to overcome the

caste barrier become almost impossible in their lives. Traditional Hindu belief in 'samsara' – the transmigration of soul brings the idea that nothing can be changed until the next life. Individual effort that can make people hard worker is also neglected because of the belief in the inevitability of fate. The typical Hindu belief that our present condition is the result of our past action demotivated the Hindus left them with no intention to strive to improve their economic condition. The material world which is thought to be temporary and illusory is hardly given any importance. The welfare of the 'atma' is given prime as it is considered imperishable. Weber strongly held the belief that such over emphasis on religion hardly fosters attitudes that promote change. Weber in *The Religion of India* (1958) concludes that 'rationally formed missionary prophecy' – i.e. the fully worked out and systematized versions of South Asian religions – had no consequences for the "ethic of everyday life" of ordinary people.

In the clash of religion with the intellectual sphere, we find Weber's view in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (2009):

"The tension between religion and intellectual knowledge definitely comes to the fore wherever rational, empirical knowledge has consistently worked through to the disenchantment of the world and its transformation into a causal mechanism. For then science encounters claims of the ethical postulate that the world is a God – ordained, and hence somehow meaningfully and ethically oriented,

cosmos. In principle, the empirical as well as the mathematically oriented view of the world develops refutations of every intellectual approach which in any case asks for a 'meaning' of inner – worldly occurrences. Every increase of rationalism in empirical science increasingly pushes religion from the rational into the irrational realm; but only today does religion become the irrational or anti – rational supra – human power.” (ES 351)

Weber's primary notion of modernity contains the core belief that human efforts—scientific, political, and economic—can lead to the regeneration of the human condition. It involves negation of the fatalistic approach that all occurrences in this world are predetermined, inherent and inevitable. Weber is of the opinion that it is not impossible to bring about change but it is a bit complex and very slow in nature. For the betterment of the society things should be borrowed from outside also.

Shashi Deshpande's *Roots and Shadows* (1992) alludes to reservations and the reactions to them by the higher castes. *A Matter of Time* (1996) shows the extent to which polarization along caste lines has made itself apparent at least in some states of India. Gopal, a liberal college teacher who has never cared for caste, is attacked by his own non – Brahmin students for an article, abused as a 'bastard of a Brahmin' and compelled to withdraw the article. It shows how irrational, intolerant and inhuman the caste feelings can make the

native young people. And the responsibility for it rests with the politicians of different shades and colours who serve capitalism. Indian bourgeoisie, which is neither willing to nor capable of providing food, shelter, education, medical care and jobs to all, has also sought to distract people with cheap tricks. Reservations on caste basis and installation of the status of the 'higher caste' are but two examples of the same which have divided people along caste lines, causing a lot of bitterness and led to the conflicts about non – issues. The process of modernization through industrialization tends to overlook the role of culture which is behind the individuality that is modern in nature. The modernist programme has witnessed partial failure because of its own success in one sense. As a result the need of individual freedom has been sidelined.

Deshpande shows her concern for caste and region in the pages of *The Binding Vine* where a particular character wants to get “the statue of our warrior queen” installed but laments: “It has to be in the central square, but it’s so crowded, there’s no place left, not an inch. They already have Gandhiji, Nehru, Ambedkar and there was Indira Gandhi last year”. (BV 151) Needless to add that choice of statues of late is often based on caste or regional considerations.

Shashi Deshpande and her novels can be well interpreted by applying the idea of Max Weber in terms of social relations and Friedric Jameson’s idea of modernity. Deshpande’s characters are often victimized for their stepping out of the accepted boundaries and challenging the set values. Friedric Jameson, on

the other hand, locates modernity in the inevitable cultural stage of history. Like all historical tales, it also brings out some repressed truth. Modern authors are a part of the historical situation; they express their individual opinion or paint the characters influenced by any particular historical event or incident.

In the words of Jameson

“...when applied exclusively to the past, ‘modernity’ is a useful trope for generating alternate historical narratives, despite the charge of ideology it necessarily continues to bear. As for the ontology of the present, however, it is best to accustom oneself to thinking of ‘the modern’ as a one – dimensional concept (pseudo – concept) which has nothing of historicity or futurity about it. This means that ‘post modern’ does not designate a future either (but when properly used, our own present) while ‘non – modern’ is unavoidably drawn back into a force field in which it tends to connote the ‘pre – modern’ exclusively (and to designate it in our own global present as well). Radical alternatives, systematic transformations, cannot be theorized or even imagined within the conceptual field, governed by the word ‘modern’.” (Jameson 2002: 214 – 215)

The advent of modernity enunciates some fundamental changes in the traditional thought process of humanity. It also promulgates social relationship

in a new way. It has an impact on all sectors – social, economic and political spheres of life. Modernity redefines our life in general – it becomes the post traditional meaning of human existence.

Jameson says

“Modernity is not a concept, philosophical or otherwise, but a narrative category..... Modernism is necessarily a periodizing category and whether it turns out to be affirmed or denied on some ultimate reading, it necessarily accompanies the individual modernist text as a ghostly allegorical dimension, in which each text comes before us as itself and as an allegory of the modern as such.” (Jameson 2002: 35)

In a certain sense, Shashi Deshpande in her novels shows that she is caught within the broader historical situation. In *That Long Silence* (1989) she has been influenced by Gandhism. Like Jaya, a protagonist of her novel, *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande was born on the 3rd of September, 1939 her birth almost coincided with the beginning of the World War II. Mahatma Gandhi dominated the political scene during her childhood and it is but natural that older generation in her novels like Jaya’s father in the *That Long Silence* and Badri Narayan’s father in *Moving On* (2004) is influenced by Gandhism. Mahatma Gandhi’s role in the freedom struggle and his move to eradicate untouchability stirred the young minds of the times with the effect that even

young men like Badri Narayan's father born in conservative and loyalist families joined the freedom struggle and went to jail and dared to marry a Harijan girl. Leela in the *Small Remedies* (2000) was a participant of the 'Quit India Movement', a memorable event of the 1940s.

There are passing references in the novels to the Post – Independence and Post – Gandhi events too frequently. Thus, in *That Long Silence* we find references to Indo – China War, to army wives squatting with children as their husbands were arrested for spying and held in communicado, to Jaya Prakash Narayan's 'Total Revolution' and an Industrial strike. In *Small Remedies*, there a reference to the lot that befell small princely states after independence. Their rulers were shorn of all pomp and power and reduced to ordinary citizens. The 'Emergency' declared by Indira Gandhi to remain in power was a rude shock to the entire nation and Leela was imprisoned during the period and Madhu dared pass a letter to her there. In *The Binding Vine* (1993), murders of Indira Gandhi and Robert Kennedy are alluded, while *Small Remedies* records the loss of Madhu's son Adit and her childhood friend Munni alias Shailaja Joshi in the Bombay Riots of 1993, which followed the demolition of Babari Mosque in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992.

In *A Matter of Time*, Shashi Deshpande shows her appreciation for Marilyn Monroe and Clark Gable as well as Satyajit Roy's 'Charulata'. Culturally, Deshpande can be considered cosmopolitan. *A Matter of Time*,

presents inter mingled stories to give the effect of an impact in the interweaving of intertextuality. New stories are produced in the novel by the way of mixing one story with another. Stories from *Jataka* coincide with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Satyajit Ray's *Charulata* is referred to while mentioning the legend of *Kisa Gautami*. Cinderella's fairy tale opens a gate way to understand and interpret daughters of Sumi. However, the Cinderella fairy tale ultimately gets rejected as a possible lens through which Sumi's daughters could be viewed (MT 32 – 33).

The disaster in marriage of Sumi and Gopal is viewed through the romantic tales of *Shakuntala and Dushyantha* as well as *Romeo and Juliet*. The most pronounced in Deshpande's novels are the references to the Geeta and the Upanishads.

She draws references from Brhad – aranyaka Upanishad which presents the scene of the sage Yajnavalkya informing Maitreyi: 'Maitreyi,' said Yajnavalkya, 'verily I am about to go forth from this state (of householder).' The epigraph indicates the central action of the novel. Like the sage Yajnavalkya, the character Gopal decides to renounce his family. But the contrast is obviously marked as in the case of sage Yajnavalkya it is 'sanyasa' as was the practice in those days to seek it after relishing life of a 'Grahsta' – house holder ship but in Gopal's case it is a withdrawal from his duties due to fear and pain of worldly ties. (II.4.1)

Gopal's abandonment of his family is not the outcome of saturation in the earthly life. His action can perhaps be interpreted more moving away as a result of pain rather than a renunciation due to contentment. Moreover, Gopal's life has nothing to offer in lines corresponding to the older Vedic stages of a man's life.

Deshpande has portrayed the misery of a family when the husband abandons it in lurch and how a woman has to cope with her circumstances along with fending not only for herself but for her children too. When let alone with her with her three daughters: Aru, Charu and Seema, Sumi does not break down in sorrow and grief. Instead she takes the step of moving on with her life.

She knows to the best of her knowledge the state of all affairs and has no confusion, "Her mind is crystal clear, she knows what has happened." (MT 9)

She has a clear idea that there is no concrete reason behind his desertion and "the reason lies inside him, the reason is him." (MT 24)

Her show of strength, courage and fortitude gathered with her sense of heroism leaves everybody surprised. She works hard in her life and carves a niche for herself in the professional front besides accomplishing other tasks like paying for her daughters' fee and fulfilling their demands. She accepts the finality bravely.

She never asks for an explanation from Gopal either on the fateful day of desertion or at any other day later on. She wants to ask him one question few days after his decision but the question remains unasked.

“..... If I meet Gopal I will ask him one question, just one, the question none has thought of what is it, Gopal, I will ask him, that makes a man in this age of acquisition and possession walk out of his family and all that he owns?

Because..... it was you who said that we are shaped by the age we live in, by the society we are part of. How then can you, in this age, a part of this society, turn your back on everything in your life?

Will you be able to give me answer to this?” (MT 27)

Religion and state help sustain the status quo and Deshpande pays tribute to these in a subtle way especially in her novel *A Matter of Time*. Besides all the allusions to the Geeta, the Upanishads, Meerabai, Tukaram, etc. her protagonist Gopal takes his wife Sumitra’s ashes for immersion in the Alaknanda. This, coming from a husband who had deserted his wife for no apparent reason, is highly symbolic. Does it not amount to a clarion call to submit to one’s religious duty ultimately?

Shashi Deshpande disapproves of the Emergency, which retorted to certain provisions of the constitution of India to make it inoperative for a period of time. Leela, a heroic figure of *Small Remedies* was imprisoned during the

time. But in the aftermath of the murder of two Prime Ministers and the terrorist activities like the Bombay Riots, liberalism is seriously threatened and hardliners are getting the upper hand in Indian politics with their demands of stern measures against the culprits. With the prevalent mood of 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth', civil liberties are likely to be affected even without a formal declaration of emergency. For one thing, none of the major political parties in India has agitated consistently and persistently for the abolition of the repressive laws enacted during the British rule. Instead, they have all permitted new repressive laws to be enacted by the central and state legislatures on some pretext or other.

Akka, one of the traditionalists expected all the younger to adhere to the age old norms of society. No free mixing with the young ones of the opposite sex constituted one of them. She also held that both boys and girls must get married at a certain age and the marriage must take place in one's own caste and in a family of high status. That is why she was willing to spend a lot for the marriage of Mini regardless of the merits of the groom. Her faith in caste was so deep-rooted that she refused to go to a hospital as she could not be sure of the caste of the doctors and nurses and accept food or drink. She preferred to die at home instead Sarita's mother in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and Sripati in *A Matter of Time* have their own obsessions about male child. As a result of long nurtured patriarchal values, preference for male children is deep – rooted

in Sarita and Sripati. Both lose their male child and ruin their family life with their irrational behaviour for the rest of their lives. Sarita's mother holds her daughter responsible for Dhruva's death and makes life a hell for herself and her daughter. Sripati holds her wife responsible for disappearance of his mentally retarded son and stops speaking to her and lives secluded from others in a room. That is the impact of the usual patriarchal thinking that gives preference to the male child who inherits the property and assures continuity to his line besides performing certain rituals after the death of his father. Vanita, Kusum's mother and Mohan's mother are the passive women who suffer in silence as they have been taught to submit to the authority of the husband. Childless and neglected by her husband, Vanita nevertheless tells Jaya: 'a husband is like a sheltering tree.' Kusum's mother and Mohan's mother too are victims of an ideology that deprives women control of their bodies. As a result the former has such a large number of children that she cannot care for them properly while the latter died a tragic death in a desperate attempt to terminate pregnancy.

As for the rebels of Shashi Deshpande's novels, Indu in the *Roots and Shadows* honours the will of Akka by making best use of the money. She spends the money for Mini's marriage as Akka wanted and also provides for Vithal and shelters Atya but leaves the rest to make best use of the proceeds of the sale of the old house. Thus she does not wash her hands of her obligations

to the natal family. Despite her extra marital relation with Naren which ends abruptly by latter's death, she saves relations with her husband Jayant and tries to improve the same. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita does not flee or shut the door in the face of her husband but resolves to face her boldly. Jaya in *That Long Silence* is an educated and a writer too but she too cannot escape effect of the indoctrination that goes on in a woman's life since early life. He has been taught to please her husband and her family and deem it as the supreme goal of her life. She has also learnt what is womanly and what is not womanly. So she tries to imitate the woman of her husband's who do not question about or argue with what men do. But she realizes her mistake when her husband lands in trouble due to some of his questionable deeds. After a long reflection on her married life she resolves to remain no longer a silent partner of her husband. Thus we find that all the women characters of Shashi Deshpande are concerned about the institution of family. They like to reform it, to make it a success despite differences in their education, status and temperament. This is because they have been taught to believe that family is an eternal institution and also irreplaceable one. The epigraph of the *Moving On* consists of a quote from Erica Gong: "All the stories that have been told are the stories of the families....from Adam and Eve on ward". If the institution of family is as old as Adam and Eve, if it is going to remain ever, why not make adjustments within it?

Shashi Deshpande's novels record strivings for adjustments for three or four generations. Change is inevitable in any society. New rulers with new set of rules and regulations have come. More and more educational institutions have come into being. Increasing rate of literacy and education are enlightening women too. Industrialization has caused concentration of a lot of people into urban centres while the pressure of rising population as well as the land reforms (even if limited ones) are stirring to rural life. Unemployment has appeared as a big problem and the competition for jobs. People living under these conditions are trying somehow to make life possible for themselves.

Modern Indian women of the new era felt the need of changing the patriarchal structure at last and as a result they refused to be within the sheltered cage any more. They attempt to redefine their relationship with tradition while reevaluating their roles within the family gradually realizing that "new bonds replace old, that's all." (RS 14) This interrogating the traditional social set up has given a new dimension to modernity. The problem of being a female has always been highlighted by Shashi Deshpande in her novels. Indu in *Roots and Shadows* brings out the pain of being a 'female':

"As a child they had told me I must be obedient and unquestioning. As a girl, they had told me I must be meek and submissive. Why? I had asked. Because you are a female. You must accept everything,

even defeat, with grace because you are a girl, they had said. It is the only way, they said, for a female to live and survive.” (RS 158)

All of Deshpande’s characters are rebel in this sense. They are born to fight – both with the society at large and within the family in particular. Also they redefine their own roles in the society. The long nurtured role of daughter, wife or mother is not accepted at its face value by them; rather they add new meaning to the lives of new women.

Through this research work, it is intended to look into modernity from the historical, social and realistic point of view. A study is made to analyze the impediments to social change in India along with identifying the forces favouring or conducive to change. Shashi Deshpande’s novels deal with some social problems that are related to modernity. The response of Indian society to them and Deshpande’s own answer to the problems is also be discussed at length.

The question related to women’s liberty and their power of assertion is examined critically in the work. The difficulties still faced by Indian women in the society are not less in number. Naturally the study deals with the social attitude towards women especially from the male viewpoint. The consequence of such an attitude is explained in detail with adequate precision.

The advent of modernity in the recent past has witnessed a complete change in the traditional pattern of parent child relationship. Indian society has some specific problems in this sphere and naturally some unwanted incidents occur due to generation gap. The novels of Shashi Deshpande accord due importance to this aspect. The study intends to discuss this phenomenon keeping the traditional pattern of Indian family on the one hand and modern attitude towards children on the other. The study aims to provide a deeper insight into the marked shift in the parent child relationship and the changes that modernity has brought into the attitude of the society.

Shashi Deshpande's women challenge their victimization and look for a new balance of power between the two sexes; however their concept of liberty is not borrowed from the West. They prefer to conform to their filial demands to ensure domestic harmony. They advocate compromise over revolt to avoid discord in their family relationship. Modernity, in terms of their new position in the society has been highlighted by Shashi Deshpande.

“Shashi Deshpande was so fascinated by her women characters that she laid more emphasis on women. Shashi Deshpande says that she knows how the women feel and she knows the mood of India. It has been observed that the predominating issues and themes in her novels emerge from the situations that focus on women caught in the crisis of a transitional society where the shift is taking place

from conventional to unconventional. She traces out the tensions in which the Indian woman is caught in a transitional world.” (Singh 1991: 50)

However, the onus is still on women to prove their assertive individuality. It is upto them to assume their role as indispensable members of the family while retaining their right to take their own decisions without getting restricted by social norms and customs.

CHAPTER II

THE CRITICAL SCENE

Shashi Deshpande thinks, feels and writes about women. She has got a deep concern for women. If that is enough to call her a feminist, she is a feminist. Unlike Western Feminists, however, she does not believe that men and women constitute basically hostile groups in society. While Western Feminists, atleast a section of them, dislike the institution of family and advocate its abolition, Deshpande stands for the solution of women's problems within the framework of family.

Women in her novels rediscover their relation with tradition while re – establishing the bond within their home. This new bond is anchored on a mature interpretation of women's roles and responsibilities in the society. It is true that Deshpande's women protagonists reconsider the value of the traditional world. The understanding of the modern world which still has something to offer constantly balances the search of these women protagonists for a complete realisation of the self and its vivid articulation. The way she portrays the relationship of women characters expresses her keenness to counter balance the modern and the traditional and the individuals with their selflessness. Women try to re – establish their self – respect by managing their duties as wives and mothers. Their lives within the society make them realise

the significance of family. Women's roles are no longer closed and inhibiting. In fact it helps them gain fulfillment and self – awareness. Their social relations are a reflection of their creative self – awareness.

Deshpande herself claims,

“I am not a feminist. I am a human being and I write about other human beings who happen to be women”. [The Times of India News Service, Jul 22, 2011]

Most of Deshpande's characters are true to life and deal with problems most women would not want to talk about – rape in marriages, lust and breaking free from traditions and stereotypes.

"May be 30 years back nobody wanted to talk about these things, but today more and more women are talking about such issues freely," she said. It is difficult for women to break away from stereotypes, more so in the lower strata of society. "When women have money, it definitely becomes easier," she said. The sensitivity towards women, their problems and issues is changing. "It is a slow change, but there has definitely been a change," she said. The change is percolating from the urban society to the rural society. And the maxim which still holds true – a woman has to do twice as much to prove herself half as good as a man.” Deshpande said. [The Times of India News Service, Jul 22, 2011]

“The women protagonists in Shashi Deshpande’s novels crave to break the silence over swayed in their relationships. At earlier stage they have their regression for past life as they are outcome of fractured families. Their parents are too traditional to accept the existence of woman or girl child in the family. Their parents are dead psycho – emotionally but her protagonists emerge out of such emotional turmoil by showing the maturity in understanding by not losing their identities and cope the problems of the life. They emerge as changing face of new woman.” [Dahibhate 2014: 24]

Shashi Deshpande tries to focus on the aspect of a man – woman relationship keeping in mind a society based on equality where every individual acquires their ascribed status irrespective of gender and without dominating one another. The eternal quest for self and recognition of the existence is the focal point of her novels. Women are not ready to accept the secondary status in the family and therefore they always struggle to prove their importance and individuality through different activities.

Rashmi Sahi points out

“Deshpande does not believe in portraying her characters in black and white. Her characters may be guilty of dividing human beings into the categories of good and bad. In the struggle of these women to give shape and content to their individual existence in a sexist

society the realization comes in the end that freedom lies in having the courage to do what one believes is the right thing to do and the determination and tenacity to adhere to it.” [Sahi 1998: 170]

Shashi Deshpande has received attention from numerous critics. Several anthologies and books dealing partially or wholly with her works are also available.

Recent Indian Fiction edited by R.S. Pathak (1994) contains but one article on ‘That Long Silence’ by B.K. Das which discusses the novel “in the light of the recent reader response”. *Critical Studies on Indian Fiction in English* edited by R.A. Singh and V.L.V.N.K. Kumar (1999) has similarly one essay by T. Ashoka Rani: “Women in Marriage: Novels of Nayantara Sahgal and Shashi Deshpande”. *The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande* edited by R.S. Pathak (1998) comprises essays discussing the main ideas of Deshpande’s novels and their literary value while the interviews included in the volume shed light on the mind and art of the novelist in her own words. *Feminism and Literature* edited by V.N. Dass (1995) has three articles about Shashi Deshpande by G. D. Barche, M. Rajeshwar and Seema Suneel which notice *Roots and Shadows* and *That Long Silence* in passing. *Changing Faces of Women in Indian Writing in English Literature* edited by M.G. Khan and A.G. Khan (1995) contains an essay by Adesh Pal on *Ego – self – crisis* in the first three novels of Shashi Deshpande.

Besides the above, there are studies solely about Shashi Deshpande by some scholars examining her works from specific stand points. *The Image of Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande* (1991) by Sarabjit Sandhu, *Shashi Deshpande: A Feminist Perspective* (1998) by Mukta Atrey and Viney Kirpal and *The Feminist Perspective on the Novels of Shashi Deshpande* (2001) by Y. S. Sunita Reddy are feminist appreciations though Sunita Reddy takes note of technique and style in a chapter while Atrey and Kirpal assign a chapter to *The Art of Shashi Deshpande*. Sandhu's attention is confined to the first three novels of Shashi Deshpande, while Reddy discusses six leaving *Moving On* out of her purview. Atrey and Kirpal too have not been able to take note of *Moving on*. Atrey and Kirpal have devoted three chapters of their works (Chapter 2 – 4) to family relations and one to the position of Women in Indian Society (Chapter 5). Then, *The novels of Shashi Deshpande in Post – Colonial Arguments* (2000) by Mrinalini Sebastian and *Shashi Deshpande's Fiction: A Study in Women Empowerment and Post Colonial Discourse* (2003) by P.G. Joshi are concerned with the theory and application of post colonialism.

Khan (1998) in his article “*Shashi Deshpande's Heroines: Prisoners by Choice?*” opines that in the process of introspection and antagonism Shashi Deshpande's heroines fail to come to terms with reality and are maladjusted where as most of the males are well adjusted.

Nityanandan (2000) in the book “*Three Great Indian Women Novelists: Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Bharati Mukherjee*” attempts to study the women characters in the novels written by the three women novelists. The women characters are now no longer objects but become protagonists. Though writing in the same period, these three women novelists exhibit marked contrasts too, along with their similarities. They appeared on the scene with an exceptional ability to penetrate into the consciousness of their characters.

Bala (2001) in the article “*Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande: An Introduction*” discusses the typical stories of Indian women in search of identity in a patriarchal world. Women’s quest for identity is the central theme of all the novels written by Shashi Deshpande. According to the author after a great deal of suffering and self – introspection, women come to terms with their present with an understanding and acceptance of their past and are ready now to march ahead with new acceptance of life.

Shalmalee (2005) in the research paper “*Gender, Feminism and Post Colonialism: A Reading of Shashi Deshpande’s Novels*” has attempted to demonstrate the variety of Indian positions / representations in the intersection of gender and post colonial readings, in the context of Deshpande’s work. The author also argues that Deshpande is translating aspects of feminism into a particular Indian context. Her work is also symptomatic of an inbuilt bias in the

study of Indian writing and post – colonial literatures that continue to privilege the narrow spectrum of Anglophone expression.

Ranganathan (2009) reflecting on the three major novels of Shashi Deshpande, attempts to prove the point that Indian feminism as reflected in the Indian fiction is a unique phenomenon that has to be valued on its own scale and should not be weighed against the scales of the western feminist literature. For this purpose in her paper “*Indian Woman at the Cross Roads: A Study of Shashi Deshpande’s Heroines*” she has attempted a critique of the female protagonists in three of Shashi Deshpande’s novels, namely *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *Roots and Shadows* and *That Long Silence*. In all these novels, Shashi Deshpande objectifies new female subjective experiences with a gynocentric vision. She basically reflects on the problems and concerns of the middle class Indian women. Her writings, rooted in the culture in which she lives, remain sensitive to the common everyday events and experiences, and they give artistic expression to something that is simple and mundane. Her feminism is peculiarly Indian in the sense that it is born out of the predicament of Indian women placed between contradictory identities: tradition and modernity, family and profession, culture and nature. Her art is intensely personal, not political. Her feminism rooted in the native environment tends to be humanistic and optimistic in its outlook.

Nayak (2011) in *“The Making of a New Woman”* takes into account the works of Shashi Deshpande. She says Indian women, unlike their western counterparts, have always been socially and psychologically oppressed, sexually colonized and biologically subjugated against a male – dominant setup. Any attempt by a woman to rise above the oppressive forces rooted in the middle class margins has either been curbed mercilessly or ignored in the name of social dignity. Shashi Deshpande all through the gamut of her ever expanding creative horizon always makes it a point to provide a separate space for her characters.

Ambika and Latha (2012) seek to focus primarily on the psychological exploration of the inner mind of women characters in their article entitled *“Tradition Vs Transition: A Psychological Study of Shashi Deshpande’s The Binding Vine”*. The writer being a woman dives deep into the inner mind of the repressed women by virtue of their feminine sensibility and psychological insight and brings to light their issues, which are the outcome of Indian women’s psychological and emotional imbalances.

Bite (2012) talks about domestic relations in the short stories of Deshpande. Shashi Deshpande deals in the above stories with the daughter and mother relationship. Often she compares the present with the past and shows that even in the modern context there has been no change in the relationship.

She sometimes sarcastically comments on the situation. There are seven stories and they deal exclusively with the daughter – mother relationship.

Devi and Mahalakshmi (2012) make a contrastive study of Shashi Deshpande and Shobha De in “*Depiction of Women in Shashi Deshpande and Shobha De’s Works*”. They make an attempt to depict how the attitude and behaviour of women differ according to the society they belong to.

Padmarani Rao (2012) deals with the women characters in “*The Literary Corpus of Shashi Deshpande*”. She points out how with a style marked by economy, brevity, concentration and vivid clarity, Shashi Deshpande presents the life of middle class Indian women in her fiction. The changed post modern society and the adjustments that a woman has to make to fit into the paradigm, with a comparatively traditional cultural outlook is wonderfully presented by Shashi Deshpande in her creative writing. The heroines of Deshpande strive for and obtain certain autonomy and thereby realize their immense potentialities for action and self – actualization. Their return home is not defeatism but the triumph of the independence of women. They learn to live in the modern society with self – identity and self – realization.

Usha and Ashalata (2013) in their article on “*Reduction of Gender Role: A Study with Special Reference to Shashi Deshpande’s Novels – The Dark Holds no Terror and That Long Silence*” tries to explore issues like gender discrimination and social conditioning of a girl child .Woman has to

conform to the norms in a patriarchal set up of family. But when she refuses to be, confronts uneasiness in the relationships. Saru and Jaya, reflect an emotional fracture of women on account of gender discrimination and male dominant social set up exist in the family. Women lose their rights, identity and sustainability which culminate in the symbolic reduction of their gendered balance.

Trivedi (2015) in her article on “*Shashi Deshpande’s Novels: In the Light of Indian Feminist Ethos*” points out that the chief concern of her novels is social dynamics that repress individuality of modern, educated, Indian women. Her paper focuses on the two novels: *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *Roots and Shadows*. Deshpande advocates emancipation but not at the cost of Indian ethos of matrimony. Any of her female protagonists, however troubled they are, does not choose the path of violating marital cords. In their place, western female might have opted for divorce or some other similar options. Saru and Indu regain their respective individuality without breaking social norms. Deshpande has justified Indu’s infidelity by killing Naren dramatically. She does not let her heroines indulge in adultery even though it is a matter of gaining individual identity. Thus, these two novels represent the trait of feminism that is Indian.

Thus the works published so far approach the novels of Shashi Deshpande from one of two starting points, namely, post colonialism and

feminism if not dealing in the conventional way with plot, characterization, style etc.

Nayak states that

“The resonances of cross – cultural intertextuality are perhaps greater in postcolonial societies in a liminal space – neither fully traditional nor fully modern – as in the case of present day India. Both Shashi Deshpande and Arundhati Roy have had migratory experiences within the Indian sub – continent, which is itself a mosaic of multiple cultures. These experiences find expression in their fictional works which literally resonate with inter – textuality, both intra – cultural and cross – cultural.” [Nayak 2004: 59]

Both Deshpande and Roy manipulate various texts and discourses to achieve radically different effects of intertextuality: while Shashi Deshpande uses intertextual references to present the inevitable clash between tradition and modernity, Arundhati Roy deliberately uses them to create a world view of decadence along with nostalgia for the old way of life. Roy shows a clear inclination towards glorious past, now rotten to the core. But, Deshpande presents before us the claws of traditionality which intend to pose a barrier before smooth progress of modernity.

Shashi Deshpande uses intertextuality as a means to reveal women's role and position in historical perspective, a repressed part of history. Intertextuality for Arundhati Roy is a tool to emphasize a pessimistic world, a darker world with its decadent aspects.

A third approach, the psychological one can be seen in some papers only like *Dimensional Depth of Female Consciousness: Shashi Deshpande's The Binding Vine* by Dr. Krishna Mohan Pandey and *Psychological Knots in The Dark Holds No Terror* by Dr. Shubha Tiwari. Both the papers mentioned appear in *Indian Novelists in English: Critical Perspectives* (New Delhi, 2000) edited by Amar Nath Prasad.

Social progress means improvement of the lot of people in a society. It demands removal of oppression and exploitation and basing social relations on freedom and equality. How far a society has progressed can be judged by the extent of harmony we find in social relations, by the way it reacts to social problems and the attitude it adopts towards people who deviate from the norms. Once people had to lose their limbs for minimum offences and now a number of countries have abolished capital punishment for any offence. That illustrates the progress of society. The studies which have already been done on Deshpande leave much to be said about social relations and social problems. 'Social relationship' was conceptualised by Weber to describe patterned human interaction which is intentional, meaningful and symbolic. The ends and means

of social actions determined by customs and traditions lead to social relations. Social actions are so common and expected that they are taken for granted. Deshpande's novels are a reflection of a social world comprising many complex relationships. Deshpande's male and female protagonists travel together across their lives in their varied and multi – faceted roles. The lead women characters are always found struggling to re – establish and rediscover their identity, social position and social relationship within their given world. Deshpande has presented in her novels modern Indian women's much discussed search for self and society, and the relationships that are central to women. The clash between the traditional and the modern from women's point of view is central to Deshpande's novels. Her young heroines are portrayed revolting against the traditional way of life, its rituals, norms, ceremonies, and patriarchal bias. Her attempt to reconstruct the identity of her protagonists, particularly, their intellectual identity in the form of their creative talents is well reflected in all her novels. The silent sufferings of women find expression in her novels. Deshpande's women not only struggle to gain new identities but also simultaneously make effort to align themselves with the accepted conventions of family and society.

It is desirable to examine the social reality reflected in the novels of Shashi Deshpande by placing the same in a historical perspective. While subscribing to the view that the position of women in society is a major factor in judging the progress of a society, it is also important to explore other factors

like the relationship of parents and children, social problems and social attitudes toward them that are relevant to any assessment of social progress.

Chapter III

INTERROGATING SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN MODERN INDIA

Weber, in his study 'The Methodology of the Social Sciences' states that

“Every science of psychological and social phenomena is a science of human conduct (which includes all thought and attitudes). These sciences seek to ‘understand’ this conduct and by means of this understanding to ‘explain’ it ‘interpretatively’ All we are interested in here is one particular type namely ‘rational’ interpretation.” (Weber 1949: 40)

Customs, norms, values, beliefs of any society are the cultural bases of human action. Along with these human action is also shaped by other factors like peer pressure and situational demands. Rational interpretation cannot always become successful because of such circumstantial barriers. It is hardly unexpected on the part of a society not to have problems. Human beings have faced problems since their very appearance on this planet. Primitive people had to reckon with the forces of nature, to learn their secrets, to make necessary adjustment with them for their survival. In course of time, they became able to harness them to some extent to make life comfortable. Even now, nobody can

ignore nature. Human beings had to live in groups, organize into society to confront the challenge of nature. Social life laid the foundation of civilization which improved the quality of life turning the primitive food gatherers into food producers. However, it developed certain complications and tensions in human relations too which are discernible in every society as they manifest themselves in numerous social problems.

So the strength of a society is judged not by the absence of social problems but by the nature of response to them observed in it, which can be positive or negative. If it improves, strengthens and leads to the well-being of the society, the response is positive. But if that weakens the society by causing ill – will, discord and disorder, we cannot but call that negative. Bearing that in mind, we proceed to probe the problems we come across in Shashi Deshpande’s novels and the response to the same found in the novels.

We find cases of murder in two novels of Shashi Deshpande. In *If I Die Today* (1982) murders take place in a medical college hospital (S. D. College and Hospital) under mysterious circumstances. First, Guru, a cousin of Dr. Ashok, a cancer patient under treatment dies followed by Suman’s wife. Then, Tony’s dead body is found floating in the tank near the temple. Suspicion in each case fell on people who had nothing to do with the crime. It is only after the murderous attack on Vijay in the dark of night that the true identity of the murderer comes to light. The criminal is none other than Dr. Vidya Agrawal, the sister of the Dean.

In *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983), six attempts at murder are made, three of which succeed. Sonali, Sharmila and Davayani are the victims who survive while Pratap Rao, Mrs. Jyoti Raman and Mridula do not. Mridula commits suicide but Pratap and Jyoti are killed by Sanjay who is involved as the doer or accomplice in all the cases. But the last few pages of the novel reveal that Dr. Girish and Mr. Verma are the real villains in the piece.

Dr. Vidya Agrawal, the murderer in *If I Die Today* is mentally deranged. Her excluded life and brother fixation have led her to that sad plight. She behaves unlike others in her profession because she is no better than the insane animal of the night. The murders committed by her are senseless, not a product of cold calculation. The murders in *Come Up and Be Dead* are, on the contrary, deliberate and planned. Sanjay kills Pratap and Mrs. Raman because they knew about his call girl racket and attempts to kill Sonali as he suspects she has told her mother something about it. He tries to kill her cousin Sharmila who is also her mistress as she hinders him from killing Sonali. Dr. Girish becomes involved in the call girl trade because he is ever in need of ample money for his demanding, smart and spendthrift wife. He masterminds all the attempts to murder to hide his role in the racket. The sorrowful widower Mr. Verma runs the call girl racket at Hotel Open Sesame for entirely different reason. Deserted by his wife, he feels humiliated and carries a canker of hatred for young women within him. In a strange revengefulness, he treats innocent girls into the morass of immorality. He maintains his show of respectability by silencing people by

bribing them or getting them killed. Francis Bacon's observation that vindictive persons live the life of witches, who, as they are mischievous, so end they unfortunate, holds good in his case. Miss Havisham in Charles Dicken's *Great Expectations* resembles him to some extent. As Compeyson had disappointed her by not turning up to marry her on the appointed day, she makes Estella disappoint Pip in like manner. However, Verma has surpassed Miss Havisham in diabolic activity.

If the misdeeds described in the two novels seem incredible, creations of wild imagination far removed from reality, we can recall several cases before 1982 to dispel doubts. Rama Raghav had terrorised street— dwellers of Mumbai in 1968, killing people indiscriminately by night as they slept in open air. Judged to be suffering from incurable schizophrenia, he was sentenced to life imprisonment. Charles Shobhraj, an urbane and cultivated man, murdered tourists in South Asia in 1970s. An auto – rickshaw driver Shankar murdered nine teenage girls in Chennai over six months in 1988 and claimed to have done that under the spell of cinema. He was executed in 1995. Towards the end of 2006, Moninder Singh Pandher of Nithari settlement in Noida became notorious after more than 38 people were reported to have disappeared. By the middle of January 2007, the remains of about 17 poor, young women and juveniles were found in the drain near his house.

The position of the criminal and the vulnerability of citizens as depicted in the two novels raise questions about dealing with such criminals and

saving the lives of their unaware targets. Neither pathology nor psychiatry has any means till date to detect and mark out psychopaths. Society is even more helpless with doctors like Vidya Agrawal. A doctor in the United States of America was detected after killing 34 patients under his care while the other after killing 54. Another in Australia became known as Dr. Death after eliminating 84. Such formidable persons can be punished when detected but nothing can be done before that. Public opinion differs and varies according to circumstances. Sri Lanka decided to revive death penalty after the murder of Solomon Bandarnaike. People in India supported the execution of the rapist Dhananjay Chatterjee vehemently and are likely to welcome a similar punishment in case of sadists like Moninder Singh. Shashi Deshpande sticks to the view that law should take its course and the wicked must be punished. That is what happens to the wrongdoers in both the novels.

If I Die Today reveals the helplessness of the patients when the doctor is a psychopath. But even then, detention and prevention would become easy if human life was deemed sacred and not a single death was dismissed lightly.

Come Up and Be Dead shows the human weaknesses that contribute to the disaster to a large extent. Lasciviousness, fear, greed and lavishness seem to be the main factors responsible for the tragedy. Sharmila and Mridula fall in the trap laid by Sanjay because of lasciviousness. Then, there are other girls who spend lavishly to maintain a high standard of living in order to appear 'modern'. Being ever in need of money, they fall in the trap of criminals easily. So, young

women can save their lives by overcoming such weaknesses to a large extent.

That seems to be Shashi Deshpande's view as suggested in the two novels.

Murder is a crime punished by law in every civilised society. It is committed due to a number of reasons. Some of the reasons are disclosed in the novels discussed above. Psychopaths like Vidya Agrawal need no motive for murders. Mr. Verma and Dr. Girish have a hatred for woman that makes them masterminds of murders. Both of them share the same fear of detection with Sanjay which precipitates attempts to murder. Besides the reasons found in the novels, there are other reasons too; as seen every now and then; greed, religious frenzy, political hostility, and sheer rage are the common ones. Superstition is the cause of murders in some cases. Human sacrifice to please some deity or evil spirit, burning widows, lynching the so – called witches is the cases to the point. Though banned by law, such practices are not totally unheard of.

Generally people denounce a murderer and wish to see him punished. That is particularly true, if the crime is committed to rob money, to hide attempted rape, or the victim is a tender – age one. If the murder is unintentional and unplanned, law does not treat it harshly. Capital punishment, that is, death by hanging, beheading, electric chair or lethal injection has been the officially approved method of punishing murderers. The form varies in different countries and in various ages. The more severe the punishment, the happier the people felt in the past. That attitude led to the invention of several crude methods of killing the offender, for example, throwing him to the dogs, getting him crushed under

the feet of an elephant, burning him alive, etc. Capital punishment was carried out in the open before cheering spectators during the medieval age. But the progress of civilisation has changed the taste and temperament of people. A humane treatment of even criminal is now demanded. People are no longer eager to watch and applaud and therefore, executions are now carried out in the presence of few witnesses absolutely required by law. Moreover, organisations like Amnesty International are agitating for total repeal of capital punishment. Several countries in the world have abolished capital punishment in response to such demands. There are arguments for and against the abolition and it is not possible to discuss them here. Suffice it to say that there is a strong case for the demand in countries where most of the recipients of death penalty are the ethnic or religious minority (e.g., the blacks in the U.S.A., the Basques in Spain, the Kurds and the Jews in Arab countries etc.)

The Binding Vine (1998) brings to the limelight the problem of rape. Kalpana is the victim in the novel. The rapist in the case is her maternal aunt's husband, Prabhakar. The man had set his eyes on Kalpana. Though her mother and maternal aunt acquiesced, Kalpana spurned his advances. Then Prabhakar, a man about her father's age raped her. Her mother, Shakuntala (Shaku tai) became a willing partner in the design to pass the case as a car accident. Her motive for the strange behavior is revealed in the following words:

“If a girl's honor is lost, what is left ? The girl doesn't have to do anything wrong..... people will themselves point a finger at

her..... Even if it is true, keep it to yourself, don't let anyone know of it. I have another daughter what will become of her?" (BV 59)

That is, society blames the victim instead of the rapist for the crime. Prospects of marriage of girls and boys in the family are jeopardized for no fault of theirs. The police, entrusted with the task of enforcing laws, go to a great length to help the rapists. The following extract lays bare their attitude succinctly:

"The police officer argued with him (Dr. Bhaskar) why make it a case of rape? he asked. She's going to die anyway, so what difference does it make.....? We don't like rape cases, the man said. They are messy and troublesome, never straightforward. But forget that and think of the girl and her family. Do you think it'll do them any good to have it known that the girl was raped?" (BV 88)

If that logic seems to have concern for the victim and her family, the deceitful appearance is belied by the following addition:

"For all you know she may be a professional, we see a lot of that. But if you ask me.....She must have been out with a boy friend — girls of that class always have boy friends the families know nothing about it. May be after they had a bit of fun she was knocked down by a car." (BV 88)

The words “that class” are quite significant here as they expose the class bias of the police officer. As the doctor refers to the marks of fingers on Kalpana’s arms, huge contusions on her thighs and marks of teeth on her lips, he gives in but adds:

“Okay.....She was raped. But publicising it isn’t going to do any one any good. It’s going to mean trouble for everyone— the girl, her family, you colleague who first examined her, us.” (BV 88-89)

Thus, the police are neither sympathetic nor helpful to the rape victims of the working class. It is sad that the victim’s family become unwittingly their tool.

Events take a sudden turn when the hospital authorities decide to transfer Kalpana to some suburban hospital as she does not recover her consciousness even after four months. The ground for the decision is the paucity of beds in the hospital. Urmi persuades Shaku tai to publicise the case and gets it done with the help of her journalist friend Malcom. The television coverage follows the press reports soon. That arouses hot discussions in the media which is not entirely sympathetic. A section of men sticks to the opinion that rape happens because women go about exposing themselves — a opinion also shared by the misinformed, backward section of women like Shaku tai. To that Radha, the fiance of Urmi’s brother Amrut, retorts: “I think men’s minds are like public lavatories— full of dirty pictures.” (BV 182) However, publicity wins support

and sympathy. Women mobilise to protest against the atrocity, there are questions and uproar in the assembly and the decision to transfer is withdrawn.

As soon as the case is reopened, it comes to light that the rapist is no other than Prabhakar the husband of Kalpana's mother's sister, Sulu. The discovery shocks Sulu rudely and she immolates herself. The story highlights two things. First, the rapist need not be a stranger all the time. He may be even a relation and in that case young women are extremely vulnerable. In *Roots and Shadows* (1992) Indu at 15 had felt Vasant Kaka's 'helping hands' giving her 'the age—old messages of male to female' and panicked. (RS 136)

She was lucky enough to save herself. Secondly, it shows that hiding the truth does not help the victim and her family, but the victimizer. Marital rape, but the other form of rape, received Shashi Deshpande's concern in her short story, 'The Intrusion'. It recorded the horror of a newly married woman whose crass and insensitive husband violated her body exercising his conjugal rights. The theme acquires greater dimensions in three of her novels.

There are two cases of marital rape in *The Binding Vine*. The less noticed one is that of Shaku tai. Her marriage was the greatest misfortune of her life. Almost a year after her marriage, she discovered that her husband neither had a permanent job, nor did he care for that. He shared a room in the police chowk with his cousin, a policeman in Bombay. Here he joined them as a free servant. She had to sleep with her husband in the common passage outside their

room. It was there she conceived and her daughter Kalpana was born. The circumstances are best narrated by her in conversation with Urmi:

“I, a woman, had to sleep there, in public with strange men walking up and down. But my husband’ — the voice dropped low’ ‘you know what men are, he wanted to..... We’re not animals I told him. As if he cared. And I got pregnant”. (BV 110 – 111)

Besides the considerations of absence of privacy and decency, there was a material ground for unwillingness on her part. Her husband held temporary jobs now and then and liked idling for months after that. So she wanted to earn some money and had just started working at a grocer’s shop. The unwanted pregnancy jeopardized her design and made life even more miserable for her. She had to endure the outrage as nobody but Urmi would lend a sympathetic ear to her.

The more noticed and better discussed in the same novel is the marital rape of Mira that gave birth to Kishor. Mira was a talented girl at college who wrote poems in Kannada and expressed herself in English too. She had to give up her studies as a stranger became obsessed of her, contacted her parents through a common friend and married her at 18. She died at 22 giving birth to her son Kishor. Her diaries in English and poems in Kannada survived to tell how painful married life was to her.

Roots and Shadows tells another tale of marital rape:

Akka “was just twelve when she got married. And he was well past thirty....He was at all bulky man with large coarse features. And she...was small and dainty, really pretty, with her round face, fair skin, straight nose and curly hair. Six months after her marriage, she “grew up” and went to her husband’s home. What she had to endure there, nobody knows. She never told anyone.....But I heard that twice she tried to run away.....a girl of thirteen. Her mother – in – law I heard, whipped her for that and locked her up for three days. Starved her as well. And then, sent her back to her husband’s room. The child, they said, cried and clung to her mother – in – law saying, “Lock me up again, lock me up.” But there was no escape.....”. Such experiences have left a lasting impression on Akka. That is why she tells the recounter of the tale to Atya before the consummation of her marriage: ‘Now your punishment begins, Narmada, you have to pay up for all those saris and jewels’. (RS 69 – 70)

Manohar and Sarita in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1990) had married inter caste for love. Theirs was not an arranged marriage. Sarita had gone to the extent of severing her ties with parents for the sake of love. All was going well until a girl came home to interview Sarita for a magazine and asked Manohar

unwittingly, “How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well.” (DHNT 200)

That hurt the ego of Manohar who is a lecturer in a third rate college while his wife is a renowned doctor. Manohar gives vent to his feelings that night by attacking Sarita like a wild animal. On another occasion, he feels insulted when a colleague says that he cannot afford an expensive vacation and his wife adds that he could have done that had he married a doctor. Sadistic attacks are repeated thereafter but Sarita dare not do anything to stop them. It is toward the end of the novel that she gathers courage and determination to do that.

Rape is a widespread phenomenon. One woman in five in the world is likely to be a victim of rape or attempted rape in her life. According to WHO figures, United Kingdom recorded 1200 cases of rape in 2001 and the British Crime Survey in 2001 estimated that just 15 per cent of the cases came to the attention of police. Regarding the attitude of the enlightened people of that country toward rape victims ‘The Independent’ reported that one in three people in Britain believe a woman is partially or completely to blame for being raped if she has behaved in a flirtatious manner or is drunk, according to the research. More than a quarter also believe a woman is at least partially responsible for being raped if she wears sexy or revealing clothing, a survey of 1095 British adults found. With such attitude of the public, the performance of the courts was predictable. Only one in 19 was likely to be convicted. The Economist

observed that at the moment, victim's prospects are poor. Frequently disbelieved, disregarded and humiliated in court, they often fear they have been assaulted twice.

In Developing Countries like India, the condition can be no better. A rape occurs in India every 40 minutes. Rape figures during the period 1987—1991 rose from 7767 to 9738, an increase of 26.1%. (Kudchedkar, Sirin. and Al-Issa, Sabiha 90)

On an average 37 rapes are committed everyday. In 95% of the cases, the accused are acquitted for one reason or other. The lot of the poor is the worst. About one hundred cases of rape were reported every year in the 1980s in which the victims belonged to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes while the victimizers were mostly security forces. In the village Tirundli in Kerala three hundred unmarried girls, raped by non – tribals, had become mothers.

Rape is not only a delinquent, unorganised individual violence against female it is often an instrument of oppression and domination against the poor, the dominated class and people. Rapes committed by Pakistan army in Bangladesh in 1971 were designed as a punishment for the aspiration of freedom. The Japanese had committed similar atrocities during the World War II in the countries overrun by them. The 'Jehadis' in Jammu and Kashmir are repeating the same since 1989. Even during peace, rape is practised to maintain domination and quell protest. Gang rape of twenty women in Pararia village in Bihar in 1988 shown in the documentary film "Rape as Assertion of Power"

directed by Saagari Chhabra is an instance to the point. As the village was the first to be submerged under water due to a major dam project the villagers were demanding adequate compensation for their land. The gang rape was organised to suppress the agitation.

Society, administration and judiciary are hardly helpful to the victims. Society blames the victim, not the victimiser. The police and administration side with the rich, the powerful and people with political identity. Several cases of rape, committed by relations were reported during the last decade. Criminals in almost all of them remain unpunished. People in West Bengal still remember the dignitary who called the victims of rape in Birati an immoral lot. No wonder then that the women of lower classes are believed to be devoid of character by people who matter and charges of molestation and rape brought in by them are dismissed lightly. Often, they are alleged to be lying to extort some money and the excuse suffices to set at liberty the rich and powerful rapists.

A law promulgated in September, 1989 sought to protect the vulnerable section but rape by the police and para – military forces remains wide spread particularly in Manipur. More than twelve years have passed since Justice A. S. Anand and Justice Sagir Ahmad observed the following but reality remains unchanged till date:

“A rapist not only violates the privacy and personal integrity, but mentally causes serious psychological as well as physical harm in the process.” (Punjab vs. Gurmeet Singh, 1996)

In the same case, Supreme Court further asked the trial court to bear in mind that their observations have wider impact on society. It held that even if the victim had a permissive life, no reference to the victim as being a girl of loose moral character was permissible. It added that even promiscuous women had the right to refuse to submit herself to anyone.

Marital rape, the other kind of rape, is less reported as it is held to be the private matter of the married couple. Both religion and tradition permit the husband the license and total control over the person, his wife. Many people deem it inappropriate to call it 'rape' for the same reason. Sociologists nowadays, however, admit its reality. Marital rape has been common in India since long as it was decided at a certain point of time that girls ought to be married to people much older before they attained puberty. Even when the age – gap is not wide, the consent of wife matters for the sake of harmonious relationship.

A well – known case of marital rape described by the victim herself is found in Abida Suttaan's *Memoir of A Rebel Princess*. Born in the royal house of Bhopal she was the mother of the Pakistan Diplomat, Shaharyar Khan and aunt to cricketer M. A. K. Pataudi. Though she had to memorise the Koran in childhood, she grew up sports – mad in a rebelliously masculine mould, played polo and hockey and became an aviator and All-India Women's Squash champion. Her horror began with her marriage to the Nawab of Kuwait. As she had put it that she entered the world to conjugal trauma.....her revulsion for

married sex produced an equally frustrating and damning reaction from her husband. That brief union led to the birth of Shaharyar. She briskly settled the matter of the child custody by driving late one night to her husband's estate, whipping out a revolver and threatening to shoot him or herself. The Nawab sensibly remarried and the two remained great friends. Abida died in Karachi in April 2002.

Ayesha Khatun, the daughter of a tailor was not that fortunate. Married on 25th April, 2004 her married life lasted not more than a day. Her husband Mohammad Afros gave her milk laced with sedatives on the wedding night and physically abused her. She bore several injuries and had to be operated upon twice to stop profuse bleeding. Her husband turned down her pleas to take her to a doctor. It was her father who came to her rescue. When she tried to lodge a complain, Nanglor Police Station refused to record it on technical ground while Kanjhawala Police Station told her such things were normal between husband and wife. Finally at the intervention of an NGO, Crime Against Women Police Station at Kirti Nagar registered it on June 14, 2004 but diluted it into a dowry case. Though she wanted divorce and punishment for the rapist, her in-laws were adamant and wanted her back. Such is the sad plight of women who are not as strong as Abida.

Even more helpless is the rape victim when the rapist is someone in the family or a relation. Attempts are made to malign, hush up and dismiss the charges. Few victims get justice. Muslim women are particularly vulnerable as

the case of Imarana shows. Ali Muhammad, resident of Charhawal in the district of Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh raped his daughter – in – law Imrana on June 14th, 2005. Not only the village Panchayat but even Darul – Uloom of Deoband declared the marriage dissolved as a consequence. More bizarre, they asked her to accept Noor Mohammad (her husband) as her “Son” and spend seven months in isolation to purify herself to qualify as the father – in – law’s wife: All India Muslim Personal Law Board concurred with them. Only the All India Muslim Women’s Personal Law Board struck a note of discord. Its president Shaista Ambar warned that this decision will be misused by Muslim Society to get rid of unwanted woman. Anyone who lusts after his daughter – in – law would rape her and then take her as his wife. She was right. Several cases of the type have been reported from different parts of India since then. Religion is supposed to be a guardian of morality. But the interpreters of religion seem to be zealous in favoring and rewarding rapists for a misdeed which is ignoble from the point of view of ethics and punishable under law.

There are three instances of suicide in Shashi Deshpande’s novels. Sulu tai in *The Binding Vine* commits suicide. Her husband, Prabhakar has raped Kalpana and the latter is lying unconscious since then. Having learned her husband’s misdeed, she asked her sister what to do. As she is angry, Sulu goes back home, gives breakfast to her husband and commits suicide. (BV 89)

Then, Kusum ends her life in *That Long Silence* (1989). A mentally sick mother of three daughters, she is avoided by her family and relations. She

lives with a distant but kind and sympathetic relation, Jaya. Eventually she insists on going to her family and jumps there in a dry well and dies of broken neck. The novelist offers an explanation of the tragedy:

“May be her fate was sealed when she was born to those feckless, hopeless parents of hers. A father who cared for nothing but smoking and movies, who never worked a day in his life; a mother whose world centred round her youngest, the baby on her lap, while the rest of her kids ran around in wild abandon, unkempt, dirty, unfed”. (TLS 22)

There in another case of suicide in *Small Remedies* (2001), that of a painter. The young man goes to the house of a friend who is seriously ill to console his daughter of fifteen. Eventually he has sexual encounter with her. Perhaps that is the reason of his suicide at a young age. (SR 237, 262-269) The painter is distantly related to that girl, Madhu by being the son of a widow who had become the mistress of Leela’s father, Madhu’s aunt. It is quite likely, he feels remorseful after his sudden, impulsive deed and finding no way to expiate his sin, he cuts short his life. His mother’s conduct may have contributed to his uneasiness to some extent.

Suicide is an option a person chooses rarely and only in despair, generally speaking, everybody strives to live and stakes a lot for the purpose. Bankruptcy, disgrace, disappointment in love, prolonged illness with little hope of recovery, possibility of detection and punishment for grave offenses are some

of the main factors leading to such a mishap. Young boys and girls take recourse to suicide when their parents expect too much from them and they find themselves incapable of realising their dreams. Mental worries lead older people to commit suicide sometimes. However if the instances of Sulu tai, Kusum and the painter have any significance, the message is clear. There ought to be no communication gap in the family and no tensions. Parents are expected to be responsible, considerate and sympathetic to their children and husbands must care for their wives. Those who shirk from their duty spoil the lives of their near ones and bear the responsibility for suicides.

We find a reference to dowry in *Roots and Shadows*. Akka has settled the marriage of her grand daughter, Padmini (generally called Mini) with a boy who has simply passed S. S. C. Despite his coarse features, inadequate education and unemployment, he is deemed a suitable match for Mini. An amount of ten thousand rupees is paid as a dowry to him and also all the wedding expenses. Mini herself deems that a good deal as she is neither educated nor beautiful. She accepts the arrangement gracefully as there seems to be no option before her. “What choice do I have, Indu?” she says. (RS 125) She is past twenty – four and she has to marry, so she thinks any man will do. Sumitra who objects to dowry in case of Mini, was herself keen on getting her daughter Lata married in a prosperous business family but the negotiations failed simply because Akka refused to pay the dowry. (RS 64-65) This shows

that not all people who talk a lot against dowry are not necessarily principled, some of them do not practice what they preach.

That is not unexpected as dowry is an old disease of Indian society and still quite in vogue. Born in Hindu society, it is affecting other religious communities too. Despite the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1986, the number of dowry deaths increased from 1912 in 1987 to 5154 in 1991 and cases of cruelty by the husband and his relations increased from 11603 in 1989 to 15941 in 1991. According to the National Crimes Bureaus 6995 dowry deaths were reported in the year 2000. Among the mega cities, the share of Delhi was as high as 19.9 percent. Apart from the dowry deaths, 45778 incidents of torture by husbands or in – laws were reported. Though that number dropped by 28 percent across the country, Madurai reported an increase of 195.9 percent and Hyderabad, 200 percent. The culprits, mostly resourceful and educated, are rarely punished if even arrested. The practice of wife – beating remains though it varies from region to region and class to class. However, such cases are seldom reported to the police.

In *Roots and Shadows*, Krishna, son of Sunanda fails twice in his SSC and she claims it was done deliberately as the candidate was a Brahmin. The novelist does not agree with such attitude: Indu expresses her views clearly in the novel: “I had been hearing of this bogeyman ‘they’ since my return. ‘They’ refused us jobs; ‘they’ refused us promotions; and now they are failing us in our exams. ‘They’ had become the scapegoats for our failures, our

weakness, our faults, injustice.” (RS 137) Again, “...it is the weak, the incompetent, the undeserving who sit and moan. There are others who effortlessly scale the walls of injustice, who overcome barriers by ignoring them.” (RS 137) She cites the case of Vithal who was marching ahead against all odds bravely.

The other thing pointed out in the same novel is that people fail mostly because they aspire beyond their abilities and aptitude. Sunil, the son of Madhav, a third class B.Sc., wants to do Business Management. Naturally he finds himself in a private institute “where you pay so much money and at the end of the year they give you a diploma that’s not worth the paper its printed on.” (RS 65) Similarly, Sharad with a third class wants to become a doctor or simply because of prestige and money associated with it. (RS 46-47) Indu saves the situation for him and he prospers in hotel business.

The real problem according to the novelist is that some careers are deemed traditionally respectable (law, teaching, government office jobs etc.). But all people are not suitable for such jobs. That is the source of trouble in many cases. People vary in skills, abilities, attitudes etc. and it is not sensible to ignore individual variations.

They refuse us jobs – that line in *Roots and Shadows* points to a problem that occupies not an insignificant place in our national life. Reservation comes like a boon or bane to the job – seekers depending on circumstances. India since 1950 has witnessed the ever – expanding phenomenon of

reservation. Initially the constitution of India provided certain concession to the depressed sections of society called Scheduled Casts and Scheduled Tribes. Some seats in the parliament and state assemblies were set apart for them which others could not contest. There was similar provision in respect of Government services. Then Government Aided or Sponsored Institutions were brought under the provisions of reservation too. Next the principle of reservation was applied to the admission to the Institutions of Higher Education, Medical Colleges and Engineering Colleges etc. Finally a new category called Other Backward Classes (OBC) was added to the list of beneficiaries. Now, the politicians are planning to extend the benefit of reservation to Religious Minorities. As propriety of such extensions is often challenged the Supreme Court has set a limit – not more than 50 per cent of the jobs can be now reserved.

As more and more people feel threatened, they react in numerous ways. Initially, the protests were sporadic, though not always mild going to the point of self – immolation sometimes. Now, with the appearance of bodies like SACK (Students against Competitions and Kickbacks) and YE (Youth for Equality), now it has got an organized form. Though the protests remain ignored and ineffective so far, it does not mean they are meaningless.

Judging from the results as seen during the last 57 years, the policy of reservation has failed to benefit those it was designed for. This is because all the poor and backward do not necessarily belong to S.C., S.T. or OBC. As

Abhiroop Lahiri puts it, there are just as many impoverished Mukherjees, Banerjees and Lahiries as the OBCs amongst our hungry millions.

A study in 1997 indicates only six per cent of the Dalit families benefit from the government policy. In the country as a whole, members of the SC and ST combined did not receive even three per cent of the degrees in medicine or engineering, though together they did add up to merely one-fourth of the population noted a study by Sowell in 2004. Quotas for SC in schools and government services remain largely unfulfilled. Reservations serve as the mask to hide the poverty that prevents people to get requisite qualifications for the jobs. It seems more sensible to open the jobs to qualified claimants available rather than leaving the vacancies unfulfilled.

Then, the policy has benefited some of the beneficiaries more at the expense of others and raised the demand for quotas within quotas. Thus, though the Chamars constituted but 17 per cent of the population of Maharashtra, they got 35 per cent of the medical seats. In Haryana they got 80 per cent of the scholarships at under graduate level and 65 per cent at the graduate level while 18 of the 37 SC groups got no scholarships at all. In Bihar with 12 SC groups in the state, merely two groups accounted for the 61 per cent in colleges and the Chamars were one of them.

Moreover, while quotas for OBCs are generally filled to capacity, more and more castes are being added to that category. It is a moot question if they are really backward. The Yadavas in the North and the Lingayats in the South,

for example, are economically powerful enough. In Bihar, the OBC industrialists have investments worth 19.99 crore and immovable property worth 19.99 lakh.

Figures about the land ownership too given below lead to a similar conclusion:

<u>Land</u>	<u>Owned by the S.C.</u>	<u>Owned by ST</u>	<u>Owned by OBC</u>
Rural	9%	11.2%	43.5%
Urban	4.8%	3.3%	36.8%

Dr. Abu Saleh Sharif, the well-known economist who put together the formidable data and wrote the Sachar Committee Report had the following to say about the policy of reservations:

“Reservations for what? Reservation for whom? Reservation for Muslims will benefit only the rich. How do you empower the poor? The answer does not lie in giving them one IAS job or one I.I.T. admission. How do you make a lot of students continue school? How do you make a lot of girl complete matriculation? Learn skill in technology institution? That should be the mission to push Muslims up.” What Dr. Sharif says about Muslims in no less applicable to others. Dr. Sharif is right in observing : “This debate about reservation is nothing more than politics.” (Outlook 4 Dec., 2006)

In order to help the economically deprived sections of the society, education must be provided at every stage in the real sense of the term. The state should bear all the expenses. The teacher and student ratio must be improved and brought to the level of countries like Japan and education must be compulsory and residential. That will prepare the learners to earn their seats in the institutes of higher learning automatically and get the jobs they deserve without difficulty. Thus the tension and resentment in the society as well as corruption and deterioration of standard will disappear.

What is often forgotten by vote-seekers is the fact that compromise in respect of quality is highly undesirable in case of admission to the Institutions of Higher Learning. Moreover, there are certain jobs where just any person will not do as the merit matters. Jobs of teachers, doctors and engineers are instances to the point. Needless to say, society needs meritorious people for such jobs, persons born in certain castes.

As a matter of fact, the very idea of reservation is a legacy of the British. Lord Curzon initiating the policy in 1905 by banning jobs for Bengali Hindus. Later preferential treatment to Muslims and Sikhs was introduced as a part of the policy of Divide and Rule. During the period 1909 – 1919 reservations for Muslims became well established. In 1935, job reservation for the backward castes was introduced for political reasons. What we have seen since the British left, is more and more extension of the same. The British hoped

to perpetuate their rule by dividing people along caste and religious lines. Their successors hope to save capitalism with the same method.

Sashi Deshpande's treatment of the problem of reservation in *Roots and Shadows* as shown above is defensive. She believes that as the forefathers of the higher castes have sinned in the past, so the present generation must atone for it. That reminds me of the logic of Hindu communalists who demand atonement from the Muslim for the sins (real or imagined) committed by Muslim rulers centuries ago. Such settling of accounts with the past is hardly a rational approach.

Shashi Deshpande pays some attention to the problem of prostitution in one of her novels. In *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983) call girl business, a form of prostitution goes on in a hotel called 'Open Sesame'. The girls who enter in the business are not the victims of misery, forced by circumstances. Rather, they choose it of their own accord. The novelist seems to share the views of the police officer Prasad who maintains:

“And yet, the truth is that all of us carry this potentiality for evil within us. We have to struggle against it all over lives.” (CUBD 55)

The potentiality leads both men and women to immoral acts. Sanjay represents the male and Sharmila the female in the novel. Lasciviousness causes Sharmila to enter into an incestuous relationship with her cousin Sanjay at the age of fourteen and reduce herself to a tool of his design. She helps him trap school –

girls to become call girls. If one tries to find out the reason of their falling into the trap, lasciviousness will be held responsible for their conduct too.

The foolish notions of those girls about sex provide the other explanation. A section of girls thinks that physical relation is “just a bit of fun.” (CUBD 72) They are eager to become modern and believe that having boy – friends and lovers makes a girl smart and modern. Mridula is an instance to the point.

As Sonali remarks:

“She was a crazy girl, all right. She was dying to get into the mod crowd and have boy friends and go running all over town, doing nothing but being silly.” (CUBD 43)

Prostitution is the oldest profession in the world, they say. It has assumed various forms in different countries at different times. Once the profession had assumed such importance; influence and wealth that the need of a manual for the prostitutes was felt. The prostitutes of Pataliputra asked Dattak to prepare one for them. Dattak complied with the request. His work is lost now but Vatsyayan's *Kamasutra* incorporates the essentials of that work in the sixth book. Written to serve as a trade guide, the book discusses how prostitutes can train their new hand, gain clients and keep them, extract more and more money from them. Later Damodar Gupta wrote *Kuttanimatam* and Kshendra, *Samay Matrika* exposing the tricks of prostitutes and their mistress to save the simpletons. Short stories and novels in several languages have appeared during

the last two centuries. Mirza Hadi Ruswa's *Umrao Jan Ada* in Urdu, Premchand's *Sevasadan* in Hindi and Alexander Kuprin's *Yama* deserve mention in this connection. These works approach the profession from a different angle aiming to find out the social roots of the profession, if not to point to a way out.

So far as the treatment of Shashi Deshpande is concerned, it seems partial and conservative. To isolate the problem of prostitution from socio-economic roots and compulsions and to lay the blame at the door of inherent human potentiality is dangerous too.

If the root of evil lies in socio-economic conditions, people can strive to change those conditions and abolish prostitution. If human nature is at fault, all hope for change disappears.

Indu's relationship with Naren in *Roots and Shadows* ends suddenly with the death of the latter. Naren is the grandson of the old 'Father', a man unrelated to her who had become almost a member of her parental home. So she is familiar with Naren from her early life. However, her sexual relation with Naren grows and culminates when she comes back to her parental home several years after her marriage on the eve of Akka's death and stays there to attend Mini's marriage. Vatsyayana counted friendship since early life as one of the factors that lead to extra-marital relations. Naren fulfills that condition. The other factor that deserves attention is her dissatisfaction in married life.

As she says,

“I wish I could say we have achieved complete happiness. But I cannot fantasise,.... Neither love nor happiness come to us for the asking. But they can sneak up us when we least expect them.” (RS 13)

She loves Jayant too much, too passionately but instead of feeling happy about it, she is ashamed of it. The explanation of the strange phenomenon lies in the traditional mindset of Jayant which does not admit of female sexuality. It was far from sober and decent on the part of a woman to be passionate, to take initiative in his view. So “it shocks him to find passion in a woman. It puts him off.” (RS 83) So, Indu is compelled to take recourse to deception, to pretend to be passive and unresponsive.

Naren, on the other hand, has a better understanding of female psychology. He is aware of the elementary truth that for both men and women sexuality is natural, that there is nothing abnormal in being passionate for either of them. He realizes that Indu expects something from Jayant which he is unable to give her. Indu is pleased to find she need not pretend with Naren. So love and happiness sneak up unexpectedly as described in Indu’s own words:

“An ecstasy filled my body and I could not be still any more. There was a joyous sense of release of passion I could experience and show and participate in. I clung to him convulsively, marvelling that I did not have to hold myself back.” (RS 152)

This relationship ends abruptly as Naren is drowned and Indu returns to her husband determined to build her home on honesty. However, she is not going to tell Jayant about her relationship with Naren.

“For that was not important. That had nothing to do with the two of us and our life together.” (RS 187)

If that sounds hypocritical, Jayant alone is to blame for it. Indu’s marriage with Jayant has taught her to reveal nothing but what he wants to see, to say to him nothing but what he wants to hear.

This relationship is interpreted differently by critics and opinions vary about its significance. Some think Indu realises her fault in the extra-marital relationship with Naren while others disagree.

Thus Anita Singh believes that Indu “suffers no guilt in her extra-marital relationship with Naren. (Bala 2001: 34)

Rammorthy remarks : “This sheds a brilliant light on Indu’s awareness of her autonomy and her realization, that she is a being, and not a dependent on Jayant.” (Singh 1991: 124)

Parvati Bhatnagar, on the other hand, takes Indu to task for her conduct: “Indu’s casual and matter of fact attitude to what she had done is shocking. Have our morals really gone so low that women commit this sin for nothing, just to prove that they do not lack courage? Is this really representative of Indian women?” (Dhawan 1991: 129)

Sunita Reddy, holds a view diametrically opposed to it. Indu in her opinion, “refuses to be consumed by guilt after committing adultery. She in fact revels in the act with wild abandon and deliberately savors the memory of it, refusing to wipe it out of her mind.” (Reddy 2001:42) Referring to the adverse criticism of P. Bhatnagar, she retorts : “Perhaps this is Deshpande’s answer to the double standards practiced by our society where only men are allowed to take sexual liberties.” (Reddy 2001:43)

Much has been written and is likely to be written in the same fashion. So, it is better to conclude with three observations. First, Indu’s affair with Naren is incidental and does not affect her marital relation. Indu is well aware of the fact that Naren “could never be anyone’s beloved or husband” as she puts it before Mini. (RS 83)

Her love for Jayant whom she married much against the wishes of her family, is deep and lasting. Second the novelist seems to believe that repressed libido distorts and weakens the personality of a person while sexual gratification strengthens it. Indu’s sexual encounter with Naren contributes to her strength and enables her to resolve her problem. Thus it has been introduced in the novel to bear out Freud. Third, modern literature unlike the ancient is not didactic. It does not aim at presenting models of virtuous men and women before readers. It tends to be realistic and therefore, its characters are far from perfect. They are ordinary mortals striving to solve their problems, seeking happiness and fulfillment, trying to learn through trial and error. So the sexual encounter

deserves to be seen as a warning to insensitive husbands who fail to recognize female sexuality and tend to ignore it.

Sarita's relationship with Boozie is also extra – marital at least in appearance, though critics have paid little attention to that for obvious reasons. Boozie is one of her teachers at the medical college. She comes into close contact with him while doing her first house post. Boozie is a good surgeon and good teacher. He teaches not only Pediatrics but also how to speak good English with proper accent, how to dress elegantly and simply, how to enjoy good food, how to read and write etc. Her husband having belied her expectations, she finds it difficult to live a respectable life due to financial difficulties. The door to prosperity does not open for her even after completing M. B. B. S. Boozie comes to her rescue at that stage. He gives her work in a research scheme that brings some badly needed extra money every month. Then she becomes her Registrar. In less than two years she passes her M.D. and four years later, she becomes an Assistant Secretary at a suburban hospital with a consulting room of her own. Thus Boozie plays a great role in building her career.

The relationship is entirely that of a teacher and student. Boozie's interest in Sarita lies in the fact that she is a woman even though married. Sarita tolerates it when he puts his hand on her shoulder, slaps her on her back, holds her hand or hugs her. She finds it necessary to please him as all the talents of her husband have failed to bring money enough for a decent living. Her husband dislikes Boozie but does not ask her why Boozie has given her money to set up

a consulting room of her own. Such cowardice and opportunism make him despicable in her eyes. As for Boozie she cannot hate him because “behind the facade of aggressive, virile masculinity there was nothing at all.” (DHNT 94) So Boozie represents the peculiar type of men who build an image of masculinity to hide the absence of it. Boozie has been introduced into the novel to expose the spinelessness of Sarita’s husband.

In *The Binding Vine* Urmila’s friendship with Dr. Bhaskar Jain borders on extra – marital relationship but does not develop into it. Urmila, an educated woman, a lecturer in a college has married a man of her choice and needs no monetary support from him. Her husband, an officer in the navy, remains far from home most of his time. When, he visits his home occasionally he seeks to satisfy her with sex. That frustrates her as she longs for emotional security and wants to reach his spiritual centre. She loves her husband and wishes to live with him and children permanently like a good house wife. Her daughter’s death leaves her emotionally disturbed with no option but to cope with her grief alone. Dr. Bhaskar Jain, a sympathetic listener steps in her life in that situation. He understands her feelings and helps her accept her loss. Her near ones like Innie and Vanaa dissuade her from going out with Bhaskar but she revolts against traditional limitations to assert her individuality. Bhaskar takes her to his residence and introduces her to his mother and tells her that she wants him to get married to a “sweet, homely, fair convent educated girl” but he has “fallen in love with a dark, sharp – tongued married woman.” (BV 161)

That open declaration of love ends abruptly their relationship as her love for Kishore has a firm hold on her married life. Overcoming all temptations she chooses “to just think virtue and chastity and being a good wife.” (BV 168)

There are several cases of extra – marital relationship in the *Small Remedies* – all meant to serve some purpose. Savitri bai’s father has a mistress, a famous thumri – singer. Though people look in amusement and gossip about it as he visits her regularly, they are not outraged as that is deemed normal for a man, a wealthy one and head of a family at that : “That he had a mistress was accepted, a wife from one’s own class, a mistress from another – this was normal.” (SR 220)

It is otherwise in case of Savitribai Indorekar. She is married and belongs to a respectable family but elopes with her tabla player to realize her dream of becoming a famous musician. She lives in a strange locality among people totally unknown to her. She finds there an opportunity to reach her goal. It is a story of success in that sense. However, she fails morally as she hides part of her life to her biographer by blanking out her association with her lover, Ghulam Saab and Munni, their daughter. Later, Ghulam Saab returns to his wife in old age who accepts her reluctantly. The only problem she faces is his long association with Savitribai has made him vegetarian. Savitribai at that stage desperately seeks respectability by putting on her mangalsutra which she had discarded earlier. Munni, her daughter begins with dissociating herself from her father, Ghulam Saab early in childhood and goes to the extent of denying her

mother too later. When she meets her childhood friend Madhu in a bus, she refuses to be called Munni or Meenakshi Indorekar. She introduces herself as Shailaja Joshi. This is because there are different yard sticks for men and women in our society. Deviations from convention are ignored in case of men, particularly the rich ones but not so in case of women. Few women have courage enough to cope with the problem without resorting to suppression of truth and even downright falsehood.

The case of Madhu's father is but the other proof of it. He is a widower. He is bringing up a daughter on his own with only a male servant at home. He ignores religious customs and rituals, smokes and drinks and has a mistress. Madhu learns about the mistress from her friend Munni at an age when she is unable to make out what it means. The conservative folk in Neemgaon disapprove the ways of Savitribai but do not bother about him.

As the novelist puts it:

“His peculiarities and follies 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.” (SR 138-139)

Leela's father had an affair with a widow. Her mother tells her about it shortly before her death. The widow was the daughter of Leela's aunt. She was brought in to help her mother as the latter fell ill after the birth of her daughter. The widow stayed at Leela's parental home for sometime with her son and left.

Nobody bothered about it and even Leela could not have known about it if her mother had not unburdened the secret to her.

The son of that window casts a shadow on the married life of Madhu, Madhu goes to an exhibition and comes across a painting bearing the title 'The Mistress.' She looks into the name of the painter in the catalogue and reads: 'He died young, he committed suicide.' (SR 238) That reminds her of what Leela had told her as well as what happened once in her life – a sexual encounter with that widow's son. He had come to console her during her father's illness, but the physical contact aroused him and she too was receptive. That single sexual encounter in her pre – marital life at the age of 15 slips out of her memory. As she does not want to hide anything, she tells her about it.

That makes their relations sour:

“Purity, chastity, intact hymen – these are the things Som is thinking of, these are the truths that matter...Som cannot believe me. He won't believe there is nothing more to tell. He thinks I am holding back.” (SR 263)

There are extra – marital relations in 'Moving on' too – namely, Malu's relation with Shyam and Manjari's with Raman Kumar. Manjari gives up studying medicine and marries Shyam, a Sindhi cinematographer much against the wishes of her family. Later Shyam has an affair with her sister making her pregnant. It ends tragically as Malu dies of a post – natal complication after giving birth to a baby girl. Malu's death is followed by

Shyam's suicide. Manjari adopts their baby girl, Sachi as her own daughter. Thus Manjari is betrayed by her sister and husband and the affair brings happiness to none. Her mother's desperate attempts to protect her daughter Malu from society show how patriarchal norms make the women vulnerable all the time.

Manjari's relationship with her tenant, Raman Kumar stands apart from all the above. Manjari is a widow who has undergone period of struggle and strain. She is self supporting, refuses financial assistance from her father, lives among strangers, withstands threats from mafia and turns down Raja's repeated proposals to marry disapproving his role of a protecting male in her life. True, she fails to her sexuality. She negotiates with the relentless demands of body by sleeping with her tenant Raman Kumar, a much younger man. That she does on her own terms, at her whim and desire, not his: "only the body, his body, only my body, my starved body. No thought, no feelings, only sensations." (SR 257) This response to the call of her body is revealed to Raja but she does not permit him or anyone to dictate. She moves on and lives on her own life.

Shashi Deshpande's depiction of extra – marital relations as given above is mostly realistic, though few women go to the extent Manjari has gone. Both men and women enter into relation with persons other than their spouse sometimes. That takes place not only before marriage but even after that. In the novels discussed above, one that of Madhu with the painter is pre – marital, all the rest are post – marital. Such relations seem to be as old as the institution of

marriage. Vatsyayana devotes the fifth book of his *Kamasutra* to discussion about extra – marital relations. He analyses the reasons that lead a married woman to seek a different lover and suggests ways and means to prevent growth and culmination of such relations. Later works on erotics follow him to some extent. Numerous stories, novels and poems in the east and the west have been written on the theme. Deshpande adds something new to that starting from a feminist stand.

Caste is a traditional feature of Hindu society. It leads to differences and conflicts. Shashi Deshpande is aware of the caste issues and gives a glimpse of the caste hysteria in *A Mater of Time*. Gopal's father "disclaimed his identity as a Brahmin out of disgust when they reviled him for marrying his brother's widow" and being a Brahmin meant nothing to Gopal. (MT 218) Yet, he was charged with having written an article from the platform of Brahmanism and abused as 'bastard of a Brahmin.' (MT 218) They hit him with their fists, their feet, anywhere, everywhere and compelled him to retract his article. (MT 213) That shows the irrationality of judging a person by his birth.

Unfortunately, such things happen not only in the backward areas of India but caste consciousness and caste tensions seem to be increasing in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Socio – political leaders of our country have dreamt since long of a casteless society. Besides a lot of propaganda, numerous laws and administrative measures have been adopted for the uplift of the Dalits and backward sections of the society. But all that has failed to remove

caste differences. This is because electoral politics in India rests mainly on caste, language and religion and it is easiest to get votes on caste loyalty. Reservation has contributed not a little to tension. It has become a well – established practice to deify or malign persons on the grounds of nothing else but the caste origin. Gopal in *The Matter of Time* is a poor victim of that practice.

British imperialism played communal card to divide the people to perpetuate their rule. They left the country divided in two parts—Indian Union and Pakistan. That created problems, even tensions but communal harmony was restored soon and lasted for decades. However, communal forces raised their head high during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Demolition of the Mosque of Ayodhya on Dec. 6, 1992 marked the sad turn of the events. It was followed by serial blasts and riots in Bombay in 1993.

We find a reference to these events in *Small Remedies*. Madhu's son, Aditya, a promising youth is killed during the riots. But the novel also deals with an incident which shows the victory of sanity. Savitribai's guru used to teach music at Bhavani Temple in Bhavanipur. After his death, his disciples began to organize an all – night performance on his death anniversary every year. Rashid Mian, his famous student performed at the first anniversary. So it is but natural that Hasina, a student of Savitribai is chosen to perform at the latest anniversary. But under the changed, tense situation since 1992 there are people who do not like the idea of a Muslim singing on the occasion. Some outsiders

have crept in the locality to create trouble. So, one day when Madhu, wearing salwar kameez, is going out on bike with Hari some unknown people mistaking her for Hasina attack and injure them. Hasina is unnerved and refuses to perform but Madhu and others insist and persuade her. Madhu writes a powerful article about the significance of the anniversary appealing all to perpetuate the tradition of communal harmony. At last, Hasina performs well without any disturbances. The incident suggests that sane people can thwart the communal forces if they are determined and united.

Thus we find that Shashi Deshpande is aware of a wide range of problems and succeeds in displaying, their impact on social beings, thereby challenging people to face them sanely and bravely.

CHAPTER IV

CHALLENGING TRADITION AND REACHING OUT TO MODERNITY

“The fate of an epoch that has eaten of the tree of knowledge is that it must recognize that general views of life and the universe can never be the products of increasing empirical knowledge, and that the highest ideals, which move us most forcefully, are always formed only in the struggle with other ideals which are just as sacred to others as ours are to us.” (Weber 1930)

In the words of Childe, man appeared on the earth

“Man is inadequately adapted for survival in any particular environment. His bodily equipment for coping with any special set of conditions is inferior to that of most animals....yet he has been able to adjust himself to a greater range of environments than almost any other creature....and to beat the polar bear, the hare, the hawk and the tiger at their special tricks. Through his control of fire and the skill to make clothes and houses, man can and does live and thrive from the Arctic Circle to the Equator. In the trains and cars he builds, man can outstrip the fleetest hare or ostrich. In airplanes he can mount higher than the eagle, and with telescopes see further

than the hawk. With firearms he can lay low animals that a tiger dare not tackle.” (Childe 1951:31)

This phenomenon that has turned mankind from a weak, helpless creature to a powerful being is called progress. Mankind has accomplished this by acquiring knowledge and applying it to survive and multiply and that has been made possible by organized social activity. Every generation has handed over to the succeeding one its accumulated experience. At times additions and modifications were done to the same as new rules for action and behaviour became necessary. Despite all our species has gained, it cannot be argued that neither our knowledge nor our society needs any more improvement. Progress is a process that goes on as new problems confront mankind and demand solution; new developments require rethinking and remoulding of our lives.

However people cling passionately to old ways and display intense reluctance to modify customary modes of behaviour. The dead weight of conservatism, largely a cowardly distaste for the strenuous and painful activity of rethinking has retarded human progress in the past and it does so even now to a great extent. There are a number of factors that oppose change and it will be worthwhile to examine them.

Religion is the most powerful factor hostile to progress. Its role as the sole monopolist of truth and enemy of new ideas in Europe is well known. Copernicus dared not publicize his work *On the Revolution of Heavenly Bodies*

during his life. Galileo had to suffer persecution for what he dared to say. Darwin delayed the publication of Origin of Species for long and when he did it, he had to add “by the Creator” in the second and subsequent editions of the book in the concluding sentence to escape the fury of the clerics. Every breakthrough in Geology, Physiology and natural sciences brought the wrath of the clergy on the pioneers. That is amply documented by historians like Gibbon, Leakey, Draper etc.

In India, it is argued that religion had a tolerant attitude and proved less aggressive and less destructive. Persecution for dissent and burning books of the infidels were not generally practiced in India. People believed in arriving at truth through discussion. That is how India made tremendous progress in mathematics, astronomy, medical science, metallurgy etc.

But here too we have to be careful and set a limit. Religion in India as in case of the Semites, Persians, Greeks and Romans placed the golden age in the past. Change through the changes according to this view is not progress, but decline. Duration of life, wisdom and strength of people declined by a quarter during the three ages that followed the first one. So people of former ages are deemed wiser than those of the later. It becomes futile then to think anew and imperative to approach the wisdom of the past and remain satisfied with it.

This attitude is deep rooted with the faith in the sanctity of the Vedas. As the Vedas were supposed to contain all the wisdom of the world, it was

considered worthwhile to memorize the hymns and re – interpret them to reconstitute experiences and observation. Gordon Childe seems, therefore, justified in pointing to the fact that while “the Greek philosophers appealed again and again to facts of common experience and the practice of the crafts, their contemporaries in India were hampered by inheriting from the Bronze Age the sacred hymns of the Veda and ritual manuals verbally remembered.” (Childe 225)

Caste system is an institution sanctioned by religion. It prescribes or forbids occupations on the sole consideration of birth and permits marriage between people belonging to the same caste. That is a deterrent to progress because ability to pursue certain occupations is not predetermined by heredity. Marriage in the same caste is no guarantee for compatibility and happiness. In the *Roots and Shadows* (1992) we find a Brahmin’s son reluctant to take the occupation of a hotel– owner, though he prospers when he takes it ultimately. In *Small Remedies* (2001), Savitribai faces a lot of difficulty as she chooses to pursue the course of music despite her birth as a Brahmin. Compulsion to marry in caste leads to brushing aside all considerations of the qualifications of the groom and enforces the practice of dowry. Mini’s marriage is an instance to the point. Guardian’s concern about marriage and dowry stands in the way of proper orientation and education of the girls. Thus one half of the society is

deprived of all the opportunities it could and should have to develop itself which is detrimental to the progress of the society.

Hinduism like other religions is based on patriarchy and perpetuates the subordination of women. Thus, according to the Laws of Manu,

“No act is to be done according to her own will by a young girl, though she be in her own house. In her childhood a girl should be under the will of her father; in her youth under that of her husband; her husband being dead, under the will of her sons. A woman should never enjoy her own will. Though a bad conduct or debauched, a husband must always be worshipped like a god by a good wife.” (Roberts 345)

In the same spirit, Manu goes on to say that a husband can take another wife after eight years if his first wife is barren, after ten years if her babies do not survive, after eleven years if she bears female children only and immediately if she speaks unpleasant things. (Manu 81)

Such laws in the scriptures have denied opportunity to woman to make the best use of their abilities and nurtured ignorance. It is unscientific to blame women for barrenness, birth of still born babies or birth of female children only. There are cases where the husband, not the wife, is in fact barren. Still born babies are born due to a number of reasons like accident, infection, incompatibility of the blood groups of the couple etc. As for the birth of female

children, it does not depend on the sweet will of the either; it is purely accidental. These facts were not known during the days of Manu. But his laws paved the way for the maltreatment of women and provided excuse for bigamy and polygamy. They also blocked research. Why bother about the secrets of birth and survival when it suffices to blame women for everything?

Early marriage of the girls has done no less harm to society. Though, we have much in our literature to believe that people in ancient India married after attaining adulthood yet the scriptures of Parashar and Samvarta prescribe marriage of girls before puberty recommending eight as the best and ten as the latest for it. Such marriages are the surest way to making women ignorant and vulnerable to diseases. Despite all the reforms during the last two centuries, the practice persists. Though the Sharada Act passed in 1929 and amended in 1978 makes the minimum age of marriage for girls 18, fifty per cent of the girls in the age group 14-18 were married earlier than 18 in West Bengal during 2000-2005 according to National Family Health Survey – 3, 2005-2006.

Manu prescribes contact with and living amidst people not subscribing to Vedic practices. Later scriptures forbid crossing the seas. We wonder then how migrations to Indonesian islands, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, China and Japan took place. As relics of Indian culture, such migrations are a reality that cannot be denied. Some historians assume that the migrants were the Shudras or heretics who were not bound with the rule. But

the assumption is not well founded as some inscriptions of the South – East Asian islands show, some Brahmins were living there and their rulers claimed descent from Indian Kshatriyas. Whatever the cause and time of the restrictions, they narrowed the vision of the people and made them incapable of learning from the developments taking place in other countries.

Again, Manu counts invention of big machines as a sin, though not a major one, no explanation for the strange law is given. True, mechanization leads to unemployment under capitalism but that is not the fault of the machine but the drawback of the system. Big machines make difficult task easy to perform, save time and produce goods on a large scale. They also reduce the cost of the products. So a ban on the invention of big machines maintains status quo and prevents change. No wonder the west left India, the land of the pious and came to dominate the world by inventing big machines.

Religion is also the source of unnecessary controversies and troubles that sidetrack vital issues of the present, lead to wastage of time and energy, and cause immense loss of human lives and property in communal riots. *Small Remedies* refers to the Bombay Riots. Adit and Munni fell victims to those riots. Then, Hasina who wanted to sing on the death anniversary of her guruji was threatened and Madhu, mistaken for Hasina was assaulted. That shows how religious frenzy divides people along communal lines and weakens

progressive movements. Fortunately, we find a lot of people around us determined to resist the fanatics.

Besides religion, there are social customs, conventions and practices that stand in the way of progress. We learn from *A Matter of Time* (1996) that there was “a time when schooling for a girl was something that could come in the way of marriage prospects.” (MT119)

So it required a lot of courage on the part of Manorama’s mother to send her to Yamuna bai’s school; more so, when the teacher and most of the students were non – Brahmins. Fortunately, such practices give way to healthier ones over time. That is why we find girls like Indu, Jaya and Sarita in Shashi Deshpande’s novels.

Then there are social prejudices that perpetuate inequality between men and women. Thus a wife is generally expected to remain a step or two behind her husband while moving in society, both literally and figuratively. The husband is expected to be more educated, better placed in life and to earn more than his wife if both of them are earning. If the wife surpasses her husband, the husband feels belittled and the domestic peace is shattered. That is what we find in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1990). Manohar and Sarita had married inter caste out of love much against social norms but as Sarita surpassed Manohar, the lover turned a sadist.

According to an age old custom of our country, men and women do not dine together. Wife serves meals to her husband and children first and her turn comes last. Husband, under the circumstances, cannot and generally does not know what she eats and if she eats at all. So the best in the kitchen goes to the husband and the wife takes the remainder. Such neglect leads to ill – health, malnutrition and diseases which remain undetected and at last there remains little to be done. If one half of the society remains suffering, how can it progress well and attain its goal?

Indian society demands modesty and mental strength from women. It means they are expected to be shy and uncomplaining; they have to suffer everything in silence. Shyness goes to the extent that women do not reveal their ailments and seek timely care for them. Often they refuse to go to doctors. More so, if their problems are specific to their sex. This false sense of modesty deprives them of the attention and care they need and leads to fatal consequences. Mohan's mother and sister in *That Long Silence (1989)* show that Indian women are yet to rid themselves of such false notions.

It is also such false notions of modesty that keep women in dark and make them incapable of controlling their bodies. We find several women in Shashi Deshpande's novels who are frequently pregnant. Such pregnancies take a heavy toll on their health, bring lot of worries and burden to them, leave little time to them for hobbies or intellectual or socio - cultural activity. If their

husbands are not responsible and resourceful enough, they get little for themselves after feeding their children. It is absolutely necessary therefore for the women to have the knowledge and the means to avoid unwanted pregnancies and keep the size of the family small. In absence of that, women at times turn to quacks in despair and die a tragic death like Mohan's mother in *That Long Silence*.

Again, custom makes husband the master of the family and as such the sole authority to take decisions in all matters concerning the lot of the family. That was inevitable in the days when husbands were well developed adults and wives were minors. Nowadays even in case of love marriages the old custom persists. Wives are quite ignorant of what their husbands are doing in offices or in business and the latter do not deem it necessary to keep them informed. They come to know about them only when some crisis occurs and casts its shadow on the entire family. The case of Jaya in *That Long Silence* is a case to the point. To become real partners in life, both of them have to confide to each other what is likely to affect both of them, rather, the whole of the family.

Experiences during the last two decades of the twentieth century and after have demonstrated well that while the scriptures are proving more and more irrelevant, religion is invoked more and more to serve political interests of the exploiting classes. Destruction of shrines, schools, hospitals, firings and bombings in public places – everything takes place in the name of religion.

Religion is also invoked to deprive people of their civil liberties like freedom of expression and freedom of movement. Such things occur not only in the backward areas in rural hinterland but even in the metros like Hyderabad and Kolkata so proud of their culture. Social customs, conventions and practices are less volatile. They change and sometimes even disappear imperceptibly as they come in conflict with stronger forces favouring change. We are going to discuss them in the next chapter.

Mathew Arnold, the British critic and poet in his *Essays on Criticism* observed that

“modern times find themselves with an immense system of institutions, established facts, accredited dogmas, customs, rules which have come to them from times not modern. In this system their life has to be carried forward; but they have a sense that this system is not of their own creation, that it is by means corresponds to the wants of their actual life, that for them it is customary, not rational. The awakening of this sense is the awakening of the modern spirit.”

This modern spirit is not the exclusive possession of the British as the observation does not apply to Britain alone. It is also applicable to India. We in India are not entirely satisfied with all that we have inherited. Part of prevalent ideas, customs and practices is not in tune with the demands of the age. Part of

them have proved simply impracticable and have been already discarded. It demonstrates that conservatism is not everlasting, that tradition gives way to change partially if not totally with the passage of time. What we have to find out then is the factors which make that possible.

Socio – economic factors are the most important ones leading to change. Indian society has been predominantly rural with agriculture supporting the majority of the population through the ages. East India Company had created a class of landlords loyal to them even before the British took over the rule of the country directly. The landlords paid a fixed amount of revenue to the government and lived comfortably by exploiting the tenants. So education was not valued much in those days. Therefore, the landlord and the money – lenders in the villages were satisfied with the little education that enabled them to keep accounts and protect their possessions. In a male dominated system, it was not the concern of the woman to bother about these matters. So they could remain ignorant and illiterate. Education, for woman was deemed neither necessary nor desirable in those days.

This state of affairs began to change gradually. First, a section of the landlords found it better to live in urban centres where the courts and government offices were located. Urbanization in its turn brought some changes in their living and thinking. Then, industrialization began slowly during the nineteenth century with the landless from the villages supplying the labour to

the mills and factories. Though the British rule was reluctant to develop industries which could compete with the British capital, it too had to seek the help of Indian entrepreneurs for war supplies during the two World Wars. Then there was the nationalist movement which promoted Indian industries with its stress on boycott of foreign goods and use of indigenous ones. Development of industries further accelerated the process of urbanization. While the landless poor of the villages went to handle the machines, others went to the urban centres to facilitate transport and sale of finished goods. Besides shops, courts, government offices, educational institutions and hospitals offered jobs to a section of the villagers who did not have enough means in the form of land to support their families.

Thus it was the landless and small farmers who moved to the towns first. The poorest of them could not afford education and found employment as unskilled labour in mills and factories. But those who wanted to try to improve their conditions by seeking some job in the urban centres were the first to care for education. But even the landlords and the moneylenders felt the need for change after the year 1947. Growing awareness about struggle of the peasants and land reforms (even if half – hearted and inadequate) in different states of India made it obvious to them that they could no longer depend on land and had to seek alternatives. Government service, professions like law and medicine or business were the only outlets open to them. All of them demanded some

education and brought them to urban areas. Even to become acceptable in the social milieu there, education was required not only for men but for women as well. That brought not an insignificant change in the social attitude.

Shashi Deshpande's novels reflect such changes that took place during the period 1947 – 2000. We learn from *A Matter of Time* that going to a school was a disqualification when Manorama was in her teens. But by the time Jaya in *That Long Silence* grew up, the knowledge of English had become desirable for a bride. As a matter of fact, Mohan chose her for her ability to speak English fluently. In *Roots and Shadows* Indu is permitted to go to college by her conservative aunt Akka as she knows the social attitude has changed and bridegrooms seek educated girls. That she disapproves of her talking with a boy in a corner of the library is a different matter.

Indu's father is a journalist. One of her uncles is a doctor while the other is a government servant. Her uncle Anant who depended mostly on land regrets all of them have gone:

“All of them. Who would have imagined it? Our own lands...for generations they were ours... and we had to hand them over just like that.” (RS 54)

He cannot even afford to pay taxes of his house. No wonder one of his sons has got employed as a clerk and the other (much against the wishes of his

own and his elders) turned to hotel business. This alienation from land, from rural background explains and illustrates the phenomenon that education, formerly an anathema for women has become desirable in course of time.

Besides the above, in India the introduction of railways, telegraph, radio and press had taken place by the nineteenth century. They got extended during the twentieth century. As people started moving far from their remote villages and towns, their vision broadened with new experiences. Even the illiterate folk of the villages who rushed to industrial centres for employment, could see that the traditional way of living was not the only one or the ideal one as people in other areas had different customs and rituals. People who listened to the radio or read the newspapers learnt a lot about their own country and about the world. It awakened them to the problems and acquainted them with what different people were thinking around them. Since the introduction of the television the process has gained a new magnitude. People were no longer passive receptors of news and views now, many of them have become interactive.

The British rule in India brought the country into contact with the west. There were pleasing as well as shocking aspects of the contact. Goethe read the translation of Kalidasa's and praised it highly. Humboldt found in the Bhagavad Gita perhaps the deepest and loftiest thing the world has to show. Arthur Schopenhauer discovered "the highest human wisdom" and "almost

super human conceptions” in the Upanishads. (Winternitz 1972: 20, 266) Louis Jacolliet wrote a book *La Bible dans L’Inde* which appeared in English in 1870. He called India the cradle of humanity and argued that all the main currents of thought in the world were derived from India. Such appreciation from the west turned Indian intellectuals nostalgic. Several stories and novels displaying interest in India’s past were written. Those who studied the past deeply realized that not all of the social practices (bigamy, polygamy, child marriages, sati, untouchability etc.) were either eternal or even sanctioned by the scriptures.

Then a section of white elite and Christian missionaries tried arrogantly to misrepresent India’s past besides attacking religion and customs of the Hindus and the Muslims. Initially the attitude of the Indians was defensive. They tried to defend everything desperately and soon they realized that there were weaknesses in their society and it was no use gainsaying them. So they began to re – interpret the scriptures and sought to reform the society thereby. They argued that the prevalent evils issued not from the scriptures but from a departure from the same. Thus, Rammohun Roy based himself on the scriptures while propagating against the immolation of the widows and Vidyasagar argued for remarriage of the widows in the same fashion. They sought reforms but proceeded with regard to their own patriotic feelings and nostalgia as well of the country men. Also, they must have felt that this is the best tactic to follow in order to influence their orthodox countrymen. Later on

gradually a part of the elite felt bold enough to think and express freely. The Young Bengal led by Henry Derozio was the forerunner of them.

The British education too played a role in this respect. Disregarding oriental learning Macaulay favoured English education and the British government accepted his recommendations on March 7, 1835. What the British needed and Macaulay intended was but the creation of clerks to run the offices of the government in India. But that education eventually exposed educated Indians to the ideas of Mill, Spencer, Bentham and other thinkers of the west and acquainted them with social institutions of the west. That exposure caused them to think anew, to re-consider and re-evaluate their customary life – something the society in India needed to break the stagnation of centuries.

Progress, as V. G. Childe remarked, consists

“essentially in the improvement and adjustment of the social traditions transmitted by precept and example.” (Childe 1951: 31)

That is why it became possible for the government to make laws which challenged social customs regarded as sacrosanct. Immolation of widows (called Sati) was banned legally in 1829 and remarriage of widows was legalized in 1856. An act passed in 1929 prohibited child marriages. Its amendment in 1978 rose the minimum age for marriage of girls to 18. Since 1947, laws giving more rights to women in respect of marriage, divorce and

inheritance and banning dowry, bigamy or polygamy for the Hindus have come into being. More important of all, untouchability is legally abolished now. It ought to be admitted, however, that the impact of western ideas as well as of legislation has not been even in different regions, classes and communities. In case of the religious minorities, the progress has been much slow due to the resistance from the bigots.

Protagonists of Shashi Deshpande are all educated; they speak English and refer to western literature too. Indu in *Roots and Shadows* refers to James Forsythe at one place and shows her acquaintance with the *Cancer Ward* in the other. She writes *A Song of Myself* imitating Whitman. In *The Dark Holds No Terror*, Sarita's friends read Virginia Woolf and discuss Shakespeare's dramas. Jaya in *That Long Silence* quotes from Marx and comments on the remark. It is only the women like Akka, Atya, Vanita mami etc. who stick to traditional practices and what is common to all of them is that they are uneducated and free from western influence.

As remarked earlier, the British policy of education was designed to create a section of clerks in the government offices. It was also expected that education will make at least a section of the ruled respectful and loyal to the foreign rulers. But the developments did not take place exactly as desired by the colonial rule.

“Pre – British India was both a geographical and cultural continuum but absence of a unified national economy and efficient, well – ramified and exhaustive means of communication could not lead to political integration. The British introduced railways and telegraph and effected political and administrative unification of India. That in turn gave birth to the concept of nation in India and in course of time, culminated in the rise of a national movement in India.”

(Desai 1959: 153)

The first All India Organization for Political Purposes was founded by a retired civil servant A. O. Hume in 1885 and was called Indian National Congress. It aimed at providing educated Indians a platform to air their views, their demands and expectations so that the government too could consider them and thereby keep them far from a rebellious course. Initially it was an organization of the well – to – do elite who communicated in English and submitted petitions from time to time. Gradually, however, changes took place. A section of the organization began to think about ‘swaraj’ or ‘Home Rule’ which however did not mean more than Dominion Status within the British Commonwealth. It was not before 1929 that complete independence from the British became the goal of Congress.

There were people, however, who wanted to overthrow the British rule from the very beginning and achieve freedom for India. Vasudev Balwant

Phadke led an armed struggle against the British in Maharashtra in 1879. The revolt was suppressed and Phadke was deported to Aden where he breathed his last in 1879. But the intellectuals observed the developments in Italy, Germany, Russia and Japan and felt dissatisfied with the policies of the Congress. As early as 1893 Aurobindo Ghosh (then in the service of Baroda State) wrote an anonymous letter which was published in the *Induprakash*. He observed:

“The National Congress is not national, and has not in any way attempted to become national.” He noticed that the real strength lay “in the masses, the proletariat, which is the real key of the situation.” (Tilak 216)

Indian press showed a keen interest when the Czar Nicholas of Russia had to concede some of the popular demands on October 17, 1905. Earlier, it rejoiced on the defeat of Russia at the hands of Japan (June, 1905). Mazzini, Garibaldi and O’ Leary had become the heroes of the patriotic youth in India. The American War of Independence, the struggle for unification in Germany and Italy, the national movement in Ireland and the rise of Japan inspired them. “Free and United India” was declared to be the goal on August 12, 1907. The song ‘Bande Mataram’ proceeded to declare the motives of Indians as lofty and noble as those of Mazzini and Garibaldi. Free and United India was also the goal of the ‘Anushilan Samiti’ founded in 1906. Ideas of republicanism and socialism were soon to become rooted in the political movement. ‘Hindustan

Republican Association' came into being in 1925 which became 'Hindustan Socialist Republican Association' shortly.

Indian National Congress, however, remained the main dominant force on the political scene. It assumed a mass character under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Whatever the limits and limitations of his policies, there can be no gainsaying that Gandhiji succeeded in involving people from remote corners of the country in the movement and politicizing them. But most important impact of all was the radical changes brought in the society by the movements he led. People speaking different languages, belonging to different castes and religions were placed together in jails and confronted with a reality that shattered caste rigidities. Women too participated in picketing, demonstrations and went to jail. That stirred Indian homes and brought in fresh air to them. Gandhiji disregarded the notions of untouchability and thereby banished the practice of untouchability from political life of the country. The Socialists and the Communists had differences with Mahatma Gandhi on political matters but agreed with him on social issues like equality of sexes, abolition of untouchability and removal of caste – prejudices.

Women's role in the political movements deserves special mention. As early as 1880s, Madam Cama (a Parsi woman from Mumbai) figured in the world socialist movement. Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Aruna Asafali, Sucheta Kripalini and several others rose to leading positions in the

national movement. Women fought against the British, with gun in hands, first as the members of the secret organizations like 'Anushilan Samiti' and 'Jugantar' and then in the ranks of INA. It is quite natural; therefore that nobody questioned their franchise in India. They got not only voting rights before their sisters in Switzerland, they got positions like ministers, governors and ambassadors well before several western countries could grant the same to women. India had a woman prime minister for over two decades and also a woman president. Similarly, political movements prepared the background for the legal rights which the Dalits of the country enjoy even today.

Shashi Deshpande's novels present glimpses of the social transformations taking place due to the political movements. Badri Narayan's father in *Moving On* (2004) was sent to the college to get a degree which "would enhance the family's prestige and status" and also "increase the amount of dowry" his parents could expect. (MO 4) He returned not simply with a degree but with a political record. He had become a Gandhian and gone to jail. As a result, he married an orphan Harijan "who had been brought up as a daughter by his guru, the man who had initiated him into Gandhism." (MO 5) When she died after the marriage, he married a Brahmin girl, but "living up to his ideals", he chose one who was "fatherless and had the inauspicious Mangal in her horoscope". (MO 7) As the inauspicious Mangal is believed to cause the death of the husband, few grooms can be found to marry such a girl and that on

the payment of a big amount of dowry. As a Gandhian, he could not and did not take dowry. His politicization had freed him from superstitions and greed.

Like Badri Narayan's father, Leela in *Small Remedies (2001)* is the other example of how politics brought about radical changes in the social outlook and behaviour of the participants. She too was born in a Brahmin family. She was not able to get higher education but she was active among the factory workers, lived among them and worked as a trade unionist for communist organization. That made her uninhibited. After the death of her husband, Vasant, she did not wash her hands of her in-laws. She did all she could for them and maintained best relations with them throughout. But after that, she did not hesitate to remarry and the man she married was a Christian. (SR 45)

Women in India had suffered much degradation during the medieval age. Child marriage, polygamy and immolation of widows were the usual practices of those times. As girls were married before puberty, they remained deprived of education – almost illiterate. The only instruction they were expected to receive consisted of how to become a good, caring and submissive wife and ideal mother. Frequent pregnancies, ill-health and early death was the lot of the woman. They had no freedom and lived at the mercy of the men all their lives. Widows who were spared immolation lived in palpable conditions. Religious preachers of different sects were unanimous at least in

one thing while they quarreled among themselves about a lot of other things. And what they agreed about was that the women were greedy, deceitful, dull lustful and misled men from the path of virtue.

Beginning with the second half of the nineteenth century women began to protest against their age old deprivation and degradation. In Maharashtra, a 52 page tract by Tarabai Shinde appeared in Marathi published by Shivaji Press, Pune. The tract called *Stree Purush Tulana* compared and contrasted the social role of men and women and demonstrated the injustice and falsehood of the men who blamed women for all their faults, weakness, failure and misfortunes.

More remarkable was the work of Ramabai (1858 – 1922). Born in Maharashtra, she travelled far and wide in India; spoke fluently in Sanskrit, Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Urdu and English. She founded ‘Mahila Arya Samaj’ in Pune (1882) with branches in Bombay, Sholapur and Pandharpur. She appeared before the Hunter Commission to represent the interests of women. She left for England in 1883 to acquaint herself with the western language and culture and remained there for six years. The callous attitude of the leaders of Hindu society toward women had hurt her deeply and she returned to India in 1889 converted to Christianity. She founded Sharada Sadan (March 11, 1889) in Bombay to work for the interests of the women which was shifted to

Kedgaon later. She did a lot to educate women and to bring relief to women victims of the social injustice.

Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hussein (1880 – 1932) sought to enlighten women in Bengal. Widowed at nineteen, she founded Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School (1911) in memory of her husband. Besides her attempts to educate women, particularly the Muslim women, she became famous for her writings and speeches. She had the courage to declare that religion was a creation of men and biased in favour of them. She advocated freedom for women and did not believe that marriage was the ultimate goal of a woman's life.

Women in the nineteenth century were discriminated against not only by the Hindu orthodoxy as generally believed nowadays but also by and even more by the enlightened west in some respects. That is best illustrated by the biography of Cornelia Sorabjee, the pioneer lawyer of India. Cornelia Sorabjee (1866 – 1954) was the fifth child of a Parsi Christian father and a Toda Christian mother. Though she passed B. C. L. from Oxford University in 1889 – 1890, she got her deploma formally only in 1925. Then she passed LL.B. in 1891 from Bombay University but could not practise due to sex bar. Again, she got a law degree from Allahabad but could not practice due to the same reason. Allahabad and Calcutta allowed women to practice in 1920 and 1924 respectively. As a result her earning was meagre. She relied mostly on her

articles published in the journal '19th Century'. Though she was pro – British in politics, she stood for social reform and women's rights.

Thus though some women were fighting for women's rights on their own, there was no organized women's movement in the 19th century. The first one that came into being was born in the lap of the British Raj and was called National Council of Women in India. It was loyal to the British and aimed at securing women's rights through social reform. Generally, the collector's wife in every district functioned as the head of the Mahila Samiti, starting a school here, a sewing class there supported financially by the loyal persons in the district. It languished after the British rule.

Margaret Cousins founded Women's Indian Association in 1917 under the inspiration of Annie Besant who expressed people's urge for freedom through the Home Rule Movement. Soon it grew into All India Women's Conference. It led in 1919 a deputation to Montague, Secretary of State for India, for the right in the political life of the country. There was always a schism in the organization between the conservative and radical elements. It set up centres where the poor and the illiterate women could learn and earn. But it could not lead them to fight against the vested interests and the feudal due to the resistance of the conservatives who considered it outside the scope of the work of the organization.

Birth of Women's International Democratic Federation in Paris in 1946 came as a catalyst under the circumstances. It invited representatives from India to attend its congress in Copenhagen in 1953. There a declaration of the Rights of Women was formulated. The Organizing Committee formed on that basis held a Conference in Calcutta and gave birth to a new organization, National Federation of Indian Women. It aimed at fighting against imperialism and feudalism and for democracy, peace and friendship among peoples – for a decent life for their children and equality and dignity for women.

Later, a number of women's organizations came into being. Almost all the major political parties, right or left, have a women's organization associated with them and canvassing support for their political program. For political purposes, they are no better than appendages of electoral politics.

They contribute liberally to the party fund, ensure much attendance to the public meetings addressed by the party leaders, supply a good reserve for party demonstrations. However, such organizations tied as they are to electoral politics, dare not challenge superstitions and social prejudices beyond a limit. Besides, there are some regional, organizations like SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association, Ahmedabad) and Vimochan Women's Forum (Bangalore) who seek to better the lot of women in their own way. Then, there are women's journals like Manushi (Hindi and English), Stree (Marathi) and

Srijana (Telegu) trying to raise the level of the consciousness of women and challenging some of the age-old prejudices.

Feminism as such arrived late in India with the rise of a new wave of feminism in the West, which coincided with some developments in the East. Sirimao Bandaranaike became the first woman of the state in the world in 1960 in Sri Lanka, followed by Indira Gandhi, the first woman prime minister in India and Golda Meir the first woman prime minister in Israel. Publication of works like Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* and Sulamith Firestone's *The Dialectics of Sex* (1970) stirred women intellectuals in India too. International Feminist Congress in 1973 and U. N. Decade of Women's Right in 1975 followed which made the educated women aware of what the feminists in the West were thinking and doing. However feminism in India did not turn aggressive as in the west. Its program in India did not pass beyond the concern for the eradication of social evils (like dowry deaths, female foeticide and infanticide, rape, wife-beating and desertion) and education, equal wages and independence of the women. Issues like single motherhood and lesbianism which form an integral part of the western feminism did not attract the feminists much in India. Marriage and family remain the sacrosanct institutions which they do not challenge in India. Mostly they believe that along with private

property and state, they are eternal and human beings are destined to live with them ever.

Influence of the feminist movement is discernible in Shashi Deshpande's novels. In *Roots and Shadows* (1992), Indu reacts sharply to the superstitious notion that a wife shortens her husband's life by uttering his name: "That's just to frighten the women. To keep them in their places. And poor fools, we do just that." (RS 32) In the same novel, old uncle remarks:

"We like our women not to think". (RS 33)

The Dark Holds No Terrors (1990) repeatedly refers to marriage as an unequal partnership with the male dominant one. The epigraph in *That Long Silence* (1989) consists of an extract from Elizabeth Robin's speech –

"If I were a man and care to know the world I lived in, I almost think it would make me a shade uneasy – the weight of that long silence of one half of the world". Jaya, the protagonist of that novel has "read an American poet's confession of her guilt because she just couldn't get along without her husband." (TLS 97)

To a traditional woman, that would not seem guilt. One of the main ideas of feminism is the assertion of women's sexuality.

In *A Matter of Time* (1996) we find a new interpretation of the story of Surpanakha: "neither ugly nor hideous, but a woman charged with sexuality,

not frightened of displaying it.” (MT191) That is why we come across several instances of extra – marital relations in Shashi Deshpande’s novels. Indu’s relationship with her tenant in *Moving On* is an instance to the point. The protagonists in such cases are not condemned as sinners but as normal human beings with certain weaknesses.

The most important contribution of the feminist movement to literature in India is highlighting a reality condoned by omission through the ages – namely, the marital rape. The very idea of marital rape was inconceivable to the people who recognized husband’s total control over the person of his wife. So he could threaten an unwilling wife with disrepute or apply force against her by using hand or stick to win her submission. Feminism proceeds with different premises. It treats woman as not a property of her husband but as an individual and therefore her will matters. That is why feminism raises the issue of marital rape. This aspect of feminism finds expression in Shashi Deshpande’s novels. Akka in *Roots and Shadows* and Mira in *The Binding Vine* are the victims of marital rape who receive the sympathy of the protagonists. To conclude, “...not to change is unnatural, against nature...It is static that is aberration.” (TLS 47) But to lead the changes in a positive direction, some factors favouring the same are needed.

CHAPTER V

NEGOTIATING MODERNITY IN THE EARLY NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE

In an interview, Shashi Deshpande said to Geetha Gangadharan “.....we need to have a world which we should recognize as a place for all of human beings. There are no superior and inferior, we are two halves of one species. I fully agree with Simone de Beauvoir that “the fact that we are human, is much more important than our being men and women.” (Indian Communication, 1994)

So the women constitute a half of the species and the novelist shares a lot of their experiences in Indian society. Shashi Deshpande tries to express openly the relationship of man and woman in a society, where men and women acquire their assigned status without dominating each other. It is natural, therefore, to find her novels focused on problems of women. The prime focus is on the quest for self and recognition of existence. All of Shashi Deshpande’s novels comprise a number of women characters who belong mostly to the middle class though do not entirely exclude other classes. They are married, unmarried or widows and generally include three generations. Marriage becomes only another enclosure for women that restrict their movement towards autonomy and self – realization. Her novels present women in changing times reflecting on their struggle to establish their identity and freedom. By presenting women protagonists as progressive and assertive, she

beautifully exposes patriarchal domination and the socio – cultural mindset. She catches attention of the society towards the real demand and the life of women. Her women are sensitive, self conscious, brilliant and creative. Shashi Deshpande embarks upon a journey into the feminine consciousness, depicting the inner world of women. Women in her novels are engaged in an unconscious struggle to release themselves from the stranglehold of a tradition bound society.

In *Roots and Shadows* (1992), we find women characters belonging to three generations. Akka belongs to the first generation. Narmada, Sunanda, Kaki, Sumitra and Kamala belong to the second while Indu, Mini, Lata, Geeta etc. belong to the third. Their stories are indicative of the challenges women face and their responses, varying according to their age and nature. She uses consciousness of the protagonists to question the repressive forces subjugating women in contemporary Indian society.

Akka, the younger sister of Indu's grandfather represents the first generation. Born in a traditional Brahmin family, she was married at twelve to a man past thirty. So at a tender age when she barely understood the meaning of sex, she was subjected to the lust of a fully grown and uncaring man. His often violent sexual advances were unbearable to her.

It was but usual in those days for a rich man to have mistresses and Akka's husband had mistresses. After fifteen or twenty years of their married life, her husband became especially fascinated of a particular mistress. He tried

to give Akka's jewels to that woman. So she had to deposit them in the custody of her father. He could not bring that mistress home as his mother would not permit it and then after her death, he feared Akka's father. But the attachment remained.

However, her life took a sudden turn when her husband, a hefty man had a paralytic stroke which made him helpless and unable to speak. He survived the stroke for about two years. Akka looked after him like an ideal and dutiful wife during the period despite all her traumatic experiences. But that sudden turn in her life enabled her to gain self – esteem and confidence and provided an opportunity to grab freedom and assert herself. She treated her husband kindly and carefully but did not relent when he wanted to see his mistress.

She told him adamantly:

“Listen to me. It's my turn now. I have listened to you long enough. She came here. Twice, she wanted to see you. She cried and begged to be allowed to see you just for a short while. I threw her out. You'll never see her again.” (RS 71)

Thus Akka who was feeble, fragile and timid earlier, mastered the technique of domination.

After her husband's death, Akka returns to her natal home a rich, childless widow. Despite her sex, she plays a new role, the role of a patriarch in the family. As the men in the family were weak, dependent and ineffectual and

lagged far behind her in age, experience and above all, money, she became the prime force holding them together. As Indu recalls, she maintained “an absolute control over her brother’s children. Kaka, even after becoming a grandfather, could be reduced to a red – faced stuttering schoolboy by Akka’s venomous tongue.” (RS 22)

“Venomous tongue” that is how Indu finds it and there are others in the family to hold similar views, though not for the same reason. What they have in common is but the dislike for a person who dominated them all. Akka had her strengths as well as weaknesses and her domination ought to be evaluated in the light of the ends it served. It is but natural for the dominated to be resentful of the person who dominates but it may or may not be detrimental to their interests all the time. It was not easy to hold together people with conflicting interests but Akka was able to do that with her strength and determination. Everybody feared her.

Beneath her sternness, there was something that made them respect her. For one thing she was neither selfish nor mean minded or inconsiderate. That is testified by two persons who knew her better. Old uncle says:

“I never thought Akka would go before me. She was only a few years older. And as strong as a horse.” (RS 29)

And Naramada (Atya) remarks:

“As long as she was with us, we never felt we had no parents. I didn’t feel so orphaned even when Mother died. And because Akka

was there, we were still young. Now, I'm both orphaned and old.”

(RS 30)

As the head of the family, she took decisions which did not please all. That was not unexpected in a family united only in “a readiness to revile others, to misunderstand, to see the worst.” (RS 60)

She was realistic enough to promise money for the dowry and wedding expenses of Mini. But when Hemant failed his first year in college and approached Akka, she did not fail to realize his worth and said, “why do you need a degree? Take up a job and start earning....” (RS 61)

It hurt him but it was the best advice under the circumstances as permitting him second chance to study would have meant sheer wastage of time and money.

Sumitra charges her with partiality for boys—“Akka kept all her softness for boys.” (RS 62)

But the above incident suffices to refute the allegation. As a matter of fact, Sumitra, a mother of three daughters and no son, misrepresents the case. She had demanded twenty thousand for the dowry of her daughter Lata but Akka did not comply. She had refused with a sharp comment:

“What is wrong with you people? Your husband has been earning a good salary all along. Don't tell me you haven't saved up enough for your daughters' marriages! Expenses! Don't talk to me of expenses! If you had spent less on saris and paints for your face and lips and nails.....you wouldn't have to ask others now.” (RS 65)

Harsh words indeed, but not removed from reality which demonstrate her dislike for the cunning parasites. But Akka had traits that made her highly annoying to the young. As long as she lived, Indu “thought she was an interfering old woman.” (RS 159) She appeared “ruthless, dominating, bigoted and inconsiderate” to her. Not only that, she mistook her for “narrow minded”, “thinking only of herself. Never of others.” (RS 22) Naren does not attend Akka’s funeral, because Akka did not like him and he too hated her.

What did they dislike so much in Akka? First of all, Akka was a staunch believer and upholder of the caste norms. Naturally she did not like her nephew’s marriage with a woman who belonged to a different caste. It appeared to Akka that Indu’s mother had trapped “such a quiet boy.” To Indu, however, Akka’s words were “profanation and desecration” as she viewed her parents’ love as “something sacred.” (RS 74-75)

Sticking to her superstitions, she refuses to get herself admitted to a hospital. “She was worried about the kind of people she would come in contact with “god knows what caste the nurses are,” she said. “Or the doctors, I couldn’t drink a drop of water there.” (RS 50)

So she was consistent in her bigotry to the end of her life. Even for the sake of life she would not compromise with her belief, with her orthodoxy. That was naturally disgusting to the enlightened people like Naren and Indu.

Caste is not the only obsession with Akka; she is a product of patriarchy. She has assimilated the value system of patriarchy and attempts to

inculcate the same values in the family. Herself a victim of the system she perpetuates the same to the extent she can. She believes that young girls ought to be submissive, restraint in speech and movement and far from assertive. That is why she is hard with the girls but her intention in it is to prepare them for married life by turning them acceptable to the male. She deems everything else secondary or even immaterial. When Saroja wanted to learn music, Akka put her foot down. She said:

“What—learn music from a strange man! Sit and sing in front of strangers! Like those women? Are we that kind of a family? Isn’t it enough for you to sing one or two devotional songs, one or two aarti songs? What more does a girl from a descent family need to know?” (RS 74)

Her strict rules do not permit a young girl to talk with a boy freely. So when Indu is detected talking with a boy in a lone corner of the college library, Akka reprimands her, because “it’s bad enough being talked about.” (RS 68) When Indu defies her and marries Jayant who belongs to a different caste, she disapproves of it the way she had her parent’s marriage: “Such marriages never work. Different castes, different languages.....It is all right for a while.” (RS 18-19)

Akka is but a villain in the eyes of the protagonist Indu. But she is surprised to receive a summon from Akka on the eve of her death. Having left home full of hatred for the family and especially for Akka, she has sworn never

to go back. Akka surprises her even more and disarms her by treating her kindly when at last she comes back after twelve years. But Indu as well as the readers of the novel are intrigued to the utmost to find that Akka has bequeathed all her money to nobody else but Indu, who disliked her and defied her all along. We wonder why. Indu herself offers an explanation of the riddle:

“A family... it’s like any other group. There are the strong and the weak. And the strong have to dominate the weak. It’s inevitable.

And Akka thought I was one of the strong ones. That’s why she put the burden on me.....I have to carry the burden. And to do that, I have to be hard. If I’m soft, I’ll just cave in.” (RS 19)

In the absence of any other explanation, we have to admit it. However, it implies that Akka admired the strength she found in Indu despite differences in education, awareness and social outlook. She realized that only a strong person like Indu could find the best course for a family full of “mean and petty and trivial and despicable people.” Though her obsession with caste remained till the end and she refused to get herself admitted to a hospital on caste grounds, she showed her willingness to make an exception in case of Indu. She wanted to see Indu and her husband (a man of a different caste) together and converse with them. That concession constitutes Akka’s homage to the intelligence and determination of Indu. To sum up, Akka ought to be viewed as a “cohesive force” (RS 159) and “a prop” (RS 70) in the family as Indu realizes at last.

The story of Akka reveals some remarkable facts about the condition of Indian women in the nineteenth century. Child marriage was the norm in those days. Girls were married before they attained puberty. Thus we are informed that Akka “grew up” six months after her marriage and went to her home. As their husbands were often much older and lustful, such marriages subjected girls of tender age to martial rape. To such brides, marriage meant trauma, a punishment. Akka spent every night in her marital home crying and nobody cared to know why. That is why she tells Atya before latter’s consummation of marriage: “Now your punishment begins. You have to pay for all those saris and jewels.” (RS 70)

Even the word ‘punishment’ seems a euphemism if we consider the horrors involved. Rosalind Miles remarks:

“Child marriage all too readily reveals itself as a sophisticated form of female infanticide, for millions of these girls lied from gynaecologic damage or in childbirth every year. As late as 1921, the British Government Official Census of India recorded that 3,20,0000 child brides had died during the previous twelve months.” She concludes her remark with two proverbs - ‘Early to marry and early to die is the motto of Indian women’ and ‘The life of a wife is two monsoons.’ (Miles 1993: 113)

Such marriages have not altogether disappeared. The practice of marrying girls before puberty still continues in certain parts of India. That is

traditional and believed to be sanctioned by religion. But that was not usual in ancient India. There are hymns in the Rig Veda which indicate that people of both sexes married at an age when they were able to choose their spouse and shoulder the responsibilities of the household and the consummation took place immediately after the marriage. Vashistha and Baudhayana in their codes permit marriage of girls three years after puberty. Gautam ordained that a girl was free to choose her spouse three months after attaining puberty. Sushruta, one of the famous authorities of Indian medicine, opined that people of both sexes ought to abstain from marrying until they attain perfect growth which happens at 25 in case of the male and at 16 in case of the female. It was much later (a few centuries before Christ) that the codes of Parashar, Samvarta and Brihadyama threatened the parents with sin if they failed to get their daughters married between 8 and 10. The other thing notable in the story of Akka is the attitude of her mother – in – law:

“...twice she tried to run away....a girl of thirteen. Her mother-in-law...whipped her for that and locked her up for three days. Starved her as well. And then, sent her back to her husband's room. The child....cried and calling to her mother-in-law saying, “Lock me up again, lock me up.” But there was no escape from a husband then.”

(RS 70)

Then, Akka became pregnant even before she was out of her teens. Her immature, undeveloped body failed to give birth to a living child. She had

miscarriages and her mother – in – law blamed her for it and made life hell for her. That is surprising and painful to learn. Her mother – in – law as a woman was expected to lend a sympathetic ear to her, to provide solace to her but she ill – treats her. We wonder why. Some scholars believe her mother – in – law had “turned her expression of aggression “in words,” that is, towards her daughter – in – law.” (RS 70)

I confess, that is not so clear to me. However, such behaviour is reminiscent of the logic of those who defend ragging because they too have suffered at the hands of their seniors. Perhaps Akka’s mother – in – law deemed it quite normal as she too had suffered similarly. But above all, Akka’s mother – in – law was the product of patriarchy, a system which taught women that whatever the circumstances, a wife’s sole duty, nay, even the justification of her very existence consisted in serving the sexual needs of her husband and to assure the continuity of his line by bearing children. She had no choice in respect of sex and reproduction. She could not control her body as marriage turned it into a property of her husband. Besides the social convention, religious sanction too is easily available to the lustful husband. Thus, the Brihadaranyak Upanisad, permits a husband to beat with hand or stick an unwilling wife if he fails to allure her with clothes, ornaments etc. and apply force for sexual intercourse. (Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, VI: 4.7)

Moving on to the third point, when, Akka had been married for more than fifteen or twenty years, her husband took a mistress. “He would have

brought her home but for fear of his mother.” (RS 70) That is, Akka’s mother – in – law had no objection to her son’s extra – marital affairs as long as the mistress remained out of the home. That shows two things. First, the society had as it still has two standards of morality. As for the wife, she had no say in matters vital for her life and health. As for the husband, he could force his will on his wife and take some other women if he felt dissatisfied. Second, hypocrisy reigned supreme in the society as there was no objection in having a mistress, only admitting her inside the home mattered.

The second generation of women in the novel comprises two daughters of Akka’s elder brother and the wives of his four sons. They are but minor characters in the novel and do not have a prominent role in the story. However, they represent majority of the women of their age — neither educated nor very intelligent, bound by all that tradition implied or enjoined and living the life of ordinary mortals.

Narmada (Atya), the eldest child of Akka’s elder brother, is married early according to the custom of the times. Fortunately, her husband is a “decent man.” So her married life is not a punishment as Akka feared. However, she is ill – treated after the death of her husband and therefore, her father brings her home. She is childless, past sixty and dependent on her natal home.

Ever since coming back, she works from morning to night everyday expecting nothing. She does all the household work and still finds “time to give

a hungry child something to eat, soothe a crying child, or relieve a tired, irritable young mother of her burden.” (RS 37)

Fatigue and sad experiences cause headache to her at times but does not blur her vision.

When Indu and her cousins were babies, she bathed them all and never got them mixed up. Indu was her favourite since childhood and remained so even after. When Indu comes to attend the summons of Akka and stays to attend the wedding of Mini (Padmini), she rubs oil into her hair, scrubs her with soapnut powder and pours water on her.

With “her rituals, her fasts and herself deprivations,” she leads the regulated life of a widow. (RS 12)

Yet, she is but a second – class citizen in the kingdom of widows, as the novelist puts it. The orthodox would not eat food cooked by her, as she is not a shaven widow. She could have become one but for the stout resistance of her brother Anant.

She is old – fashioned and believes that women ought to circumbulate the tulsi, stand devotedly in front of it with folded hands and closed eyes and pray for safety and long life of their husbands. Even her widowhood has not shaken her faith. She holds that a wife is fortunate if she does not survive her husband.

Her conservatism is best expressed through her shock at the thought of her nephew Sharad going into the hotel business.

“To her, there are still very few respectable careers. The law, teaching, working in a governmental office, and what to her are the new fangled ones.....medicine and engineering.” (RS 69)

Though her nephew qualifies for none of these, she would not like any other career for him. Eventually though, Indu’s wisdom prevails and Sharad prospers in the hotel business.

Initially, she opposes inter caste marriages but experience teaches her to give up her rigid attitude. This is because she cannot shun dear ones. When her brother Govind marries a woman of a different caste, she does not like it like the rest of the family. But her utmost concern is not the tradition, but the happiness of her brother. So later she remarks: “What difference did it make? She could have made him happy.” (RS 132) Demise of Govind’s wife proves a catalyst to her thought. Had her sister – in – law lived longer, her intelligent brother would not have become a wanderer. Indu too like her father marries inter – caste later. Atya is at that time mentally prepared to ignore the caste if it brings happiness to Indu.

Her softness for Akka is irritating to Indu who is ignorant of a lot of things. Akka was kind to her and permitted her to sleep in her room. She feels both orphaned and old after Akka’s death and remembers her services to the family. At last, she succeeds in removing Indu’s hostility toward the dead woman by telling her Akka’s story.

After Akka, Atya belongs to the trio who have become “just anachronisms” as they are “struggling to survive in increasingly alien, hostile environment,” who are “struggling to keep the fabric of the family intact.” She has something in common with old uncle and Kaka: A lack of the sense of ‘yours’ and ‘mine’. (RS 132)

Atya is characterized by her “undemanding affection.” And if one has to divide people into two categories of the giver and the taker, one must place her among the giver, as Indu puts it.

The idea of selling the parental home to a promoter who wants to build a hotel on that site seems horrible to her. Its destruction means dissolution of the united family which provides security to helpless widows like her. Eventually the house is sold to Shankarappa and Atya feels undone.

Narmada’s youngest sister Sunanda is diametrically opposite to her. She is cunning and manipulative. She got married to the first man who proposed to her at the age of sixteen. She was called lucky for that, she was taught early that “being a female, she could neither assert, nor demand or proclaim” So, adopting herself to her circumstances and environment, she has become “cunning, greedy, devious and unscrupulous.” (RS 32)

Her cunningness, however, does not stand in the way of submitting to superstitions. Thus she believes a wife should not pronounce her husband’s name: “shows disrespect.....They also say it shortens your husband’s life. (RS 51)

Sunanda is not modern like Indu as she herself confesses. Her out-datedness is revealed in her unplanned motherhood. Her husband Vinayak contributes nothing to the family, has no job and no earning and yet she has five children. Having children to her is not “something you should think and plan about. You should just have them.” (RS 137) That makes her a “pure, female animal” as the novelist puts it.

Though she looks helpless and feeble, she is ahead of others in looking after the interests of herself and her children. Even in the crowded house on the occasion of Mini’s marriage, she could manage mattresses, blankets and pillows for all of them; for her and her children. Her self interest causes her to plead against spending money for Mini’s marriage. Mini is her niece and she is well aware of the reasons for Akka’s decision. Yet, she opposes on the ground of the disqualification of the groom and his family:

“If you ask me, Indu, it isn’t worth it, giving all that money to that family.....Instead of spending so much money in that marriage, wouldn’t it be better to spend it on this house.....our father’s house? Her concern is deep, she is “frightened and desolate” as the house provides her a much – needed security but it betrays her utter disregard for Mini as she offers no alternative. (RS 135, 139)

The self – seeking woman does not hesitate to besmear others when it serves her interests. Thus she forgets all Old Uncle has done for the family and charges him of parasitism:

“He doesn’t have to bother about jobs and money. He knows he’ll always get enough to eat and drink in this house.” (RS 55)

That is an outrage on the part of a person who is herself a parasite. Naturally, it arouses “diabolical anger” in Indu.

In the same view, she accuses Kaki (Anant’s wife) of depriving her of the silver her mother had promised for her son, Krishna. As a matter of fact, Sunanda’s mother breathed her last before Krishna’s birth and the promise was but a concoction of greedy Sunanda. Kaki rejected her claim but presented a single silver tumbler to Krishna on his naming day. As Sunanda would have all or nothing, she presented the same to Sharad on his thread ceremony soon after.

Quite characteristic of her crafty nature is her attempt to extract money for her irresponsible husband and twice S.S.C. failed son. Her husband needs some capital to get into partnership with a businessman and her son wants money to start a repairing shop. Akka was intelligent enough to recognize their worth and Indu too does not fail to evaluate them correctly. Needless, she pays no heed to Sunanda.

The characters of Narmada and Sunanda illustrate two aspects of the joint family system. On the positive side, it provides refuge to the weak and the unfortunate like childless widows and old people. It also gives love and care to young ones. On the negative side, it breeds parasites like Sunanda and Vasant who need not bother about the size of the family and the means to support it as they find it easy to exploit others.

Kaki, Sumitra and Kamala — wives of Anant, Madhav and Vinayak are the other women who belong to the same generation. Kaki is the traditional type of woman. As two of her sons, Hemant and Sumant are employed, she is worried about the marriage of her only daughter Mini and the career of her son Sharad. As soon as that is done, she wants to go on pilgrimage: “to Kashi and Badri and what not.” (RS 120)

She is outspoken by nature. She takes to task Sumitra and Madhav Rao for failing to come after Akka’s death and deciding to come for the thirteenth day. She is disgusted with Sunanda’s charge of stealing silver vessels and resents frequent questions about the income from land and mangoes. She does not hesitate to complain to Indu against her father’s long absence from home.

Initially, she has doubts if Indu will agree to pay for Mini’s marriage. So, she entertains rather half – heartedly the idea of Mini’s marriage with Naren as he would not demand dowry. When Naren refuses, she prepares to give her daughter in marriage with the groom selected previously by Akka and spend the money on the marriage instead of maintaining the family house. She dreams of a small house:

“With a small kitchen. A gas to cook on. Shining pots and pans lined on shelves.” (RS 58)

Why is she least concerned about the family house? “Since I came into this house, my lot has been work, work, and yet more work. As long as we are here, there’ll always be parasites. People come and

stay here as if they have a right over this house.....And who has to foot the bill after-words? Us.None of them ever share the work.” (RS 64)

That reads like an epitaph on the joint family system. All trying to reap the benefits of it and few contributing to maintain it has assured its death. The novelist is justified in calling the three who wanted to keep the joint family intact ‘anachronisms’.

Sumitra, Madhav’s wife, is the daughter of a man who was a Civil Surgeon and ended up as Director of Medical Services. Her husband is a top ranking Civil Servant. She is convent educated, speaks English most of the time. She is proud of her privileged position in the society and lives a “different, superior and exclusive” life even in the joint family. She refers to her husband as ‘the saheb’ all the time. She carefully avoids mixing her own clothes with those of others and washes every thing in the house when a guest leaves. It is horrible for her to use public toilets and deems it necessary to tell one and all that she travels first class like her father.

She indulges in platitudes and maintains a show of urbanity. But she is hardly liberal in money matters. Her husband paid taxes for his family house last year but Anant dares not ask him again lest Sumitra “eat him up alive”. (RS 121,181)

Her son Sunil, a third class B.Sc failed to extract from Akka and she bears a grudge against her for that. Then her attempt to get an amount of twenty

thousand for dowry too fails which ends the negotiations for Lata's marriage. She misrepresents her independent minded boy doing his Business Management unnecessarily rebuked by Akka. In case of Lata, she hides the fact that negotiations broke off because of the dowry and claims to have refused the proposal as the groom was not that cultured.

Thus we find that education has not given much positive outlook to her. She is vain, showy, and hypocritical. She talks about things like 'dignity of labour' which she hardly practices. Prosperity has not made her generous. Dowry and other expenses on Mini's wedding appears sheer wastage to her, but she would have spent even more for the wedding of her daughter had Akka conceded. She spends a lot on dress and cosmetics, a fact Akka noticed and resented. As a matter of fact, she represents a section of the well – to – do women who are neither intelligent, nor honest and devoid of any sense of values.

Kamala, Vinayak's wife, has three daughters. Her husband is a licentiate doctor in a small town. She is not as reserved as Sumitra and laughs loudly. However, she is unhappy about the fact that she has only daughters. While her husband is proud of his "bouncing, healthy girls", she is more concerned about their marriage which requires money. She shares with her husband the idea that Anant had "to flatter and fawn" to get money for Mini's wedding. Bitterly she remarks: "Akka kept all her softness for boys." Hardly accurate as a statement of fact, it is indicative of her mentality. First of all, she

deems it her misfortune to have daughters only. Secondly, she wants to shift her financial burden to others.

Then, there is the old woman who helps Kaki in the kitchen. She is a widow who has got her head shaved according to the custom. Her bare skull with its short hair looks “not only indecent, but obscene when bared.” (RS 125) She is needy. She comes to Kaki and helps her for money and one square meal denied to her by her daughter – in – law.

Poverty has affected her conduct and brought disrepute to her. She is believed to have “the sharpest ears and the longest tongue in the town.” (RS 128) Kaki does not like to leave her alone in the kitchen because she may drink some of the buttermilk and carry many things in the folds of her sari.

The old woman belongs to that section of women which is “riddled with ignorance, prejudice and superstition.” (RS 125) Academic distinctions, career, success and money mean nothing to them. To them, marriage and reproduction are the only success a woman is expected to have. So they look down upon the childless women. As Indu is childless, the old woman speaks contemptuously of her.

The old woman is proud of her two names, Ganga and Kavery, “both good and holy names”. The first she got from her grandmother and the second from her mother-in-law. Her pride seems quite wide off the mark as nobody uses those names anymore. Married women are generally known as someone’s daughter – in – law, sister – in – law, mother – in – law or aunt etc. and called

accordingly. So the names become meaningless. But then the poor and the ignorant too need something to console them. Holy names, sons and grandsons etc. serve the purpose.

The third generation of women in the novel comprises Indu, Mini, Lata and Geeta. As the last two are but names in the story, we have to discuss only the first two. Mini as we have noticed earlier is the daughter of Anant while Indu is Govind's daughter. None of the cousins is beautiful. That is the only similarity they share. They differ in intellect, education and temperament.

Tradition brings up girls with an oppressive sexist bias. It teaches two things to them from the very beginning. First of them is that girls are but birds of passage and they have to leave their parental home soon by marriage. The second lesson they learn is that they have to become good housekeepers in order to become eligible as suitable brides and later good wives.

As Mini says to Indu:

“.....ever since we were small, we were told.....,” “you'll be going away one day to your own home.” They said to you and me, never to Hemant or Sumant or Sharaad or Sunil'. (RS 3, 50-51)

So she seriously believes that she has to marry somehow to get a home as the parental home is not hers. Adhering to the lessons taught, she has also acquired the capability to look after a house as she puts it:

“There's only one thing I'm really good at.....looking after a house.” (RS 64)

As for her education, she admits her failure frankly: “I’m no good at studies, I never was. I went to school because – I had to. And then to college, because Akka said I must go. Boys prefer graduates these days, she said, so I went. But I failed and it was a relief to give it up.” (RS 3) That is a shortcoming that makes her dependent and a non – chooser.

She is well aware of the groom Akka has chosen for her. His “coarse features and crude mannerisms”, his failure to pass through the college, his ugliness are no secrets to her. She knows that her guardians have to pay a dowry of rupees ten thousand for the marriage. But as the groom belongs to the same community, owns a lot of property, and has consented to the marriage proposal, the sensible and pragmatic girl finds it pointless to bother about the disqualification of the bridegroom.

“To her it was marriage that mattered, not the man.” She thinks she is “fulfilling her destiny” by getting married. (RS 126)

Mini is a realist and her thinking is based on practical considerations. She is past twenty – four. If girls remain unmarried at such age, people raise questions and even pity them. She is tired of such interrogation. Marriage will give her a husband to look after her and put an end to those questions. That is no mean relief to her. That is why she says:

“I don’t care what kind of a man he is. Once we are married, and he becomes my husband, none of his flaws will matter.” (RS 32)

There is the other consideration too. The entire process of marriage negotiation is tiring and taxing to the patience of both the guardians and the prospective bride. The guardians have to seek grooms and to send the horoscope and wait. If it does not match and is returned, they are disappointed. If it matches, they come to interview the girl. They ask questions; observe her gait, dress, speech and manners etc. The guardians have to feed and attend the guests. Sometimes, someone else in the family wants to see the girl and they have to arrange the meeting again. Sometimes the girl is rejected as not enough and sometimes as too fashionable, sometimes she is found too short or too tall. When it happens time and again, it is but natural for the girl to feel humiliated, to think she has committed a great crime by being born a girl. So she wishes to get married at the earliest in order to save her parents from the agony.

As Mini says to Indu:

“And finally, if everything was fine, there was the dowry....And now, when someone has agreed, can I refuse and make Kaka go through all of it all over again?” (RS 158)

Mini’s marriage like most of the marriages in the country is arranged. Such marriages are not based on love and are far from romantic. They are cold calculations, on expediency. So Indu remarks:

“Behind the facade of romanticism, sentiment and tradition, what was marriage after all, but two people brought together after cold –

calculated bargaining to meet, mate and reproduce so that the generations might continue?" (RS 99)

Indu is the protagonist of the novel who discovers through experience her roots (as a woman and a writer) and shadows (as a daughter and a commercial journalist). Intelligent and educated, she is devoid of superstitions and questions traditional behaviour. For example, she does not believe that worshipping the tulsi and praying for longevity increases the life of a woman's husband or pronouncing his name shortens it. "That's just to frighten the women. To keep them in their places." (RS 67)

She questions the established norms and refuses to become a replica of the elderly woman around her. To put it in her own words:

"As a child, they had told me that I must be obedient and uncompromising. As a girl, they had told me I must be meek and submissive. Why? I had asked. Because you are female. You must accept everything, even defeat with grace because you are a girl, they had said. It is the only way they said, for a female to live and survive.....' I had laughed at them, and sworn I would never pretend to be what I was not." (RS 15,17)

As a modern woman Indu disparages traditional marriages as they are not based on compatibility but religion, caste, community and dowry etc. and leave "human emotions." Women married that way and devoted to their husbands are but an enigma to her. She wonders if they are "martyrs,

heroines, or just stupid fools.” (RS 159) As a mark of protest against the tradition, she marries outside her caste and leaves the house of her father’s family.

Her married life begins with love, but does not sail smoothly. There are problems in her career of journalism and there are problems in her conjugal life. Part of these problems is caused by others while part of them is the product of her fault. For the sake of her husband Jayant who wants to maintain a high standard of living and needs money for the purpose, she has to compromise and “write the kind of things that are acceptable, popular and easily sold.” (RS 14) She is disgusted with flattery and dishonesty but Jayant comes in her way. Problems of her conjugal life are far deeper and agonizing. As Jayant is shocked to find passion in her, she is compelled to pretend passiveness, to deny her womanhood and thereby experience loss of self – esteem.

It is at this critical juncture of life that she is summoned by Akka and returns to her natal house after more than a decade. Akka dies soon after meeting her and leaves her property to Indu. Indu has now to resolve her own problems as well as to fulfil her obligations towards the family. Eventually she succeeds in both respects. Her meeting with Naren proves a catalyst to her to a large extent. Naren is a harsh critic of her writings who exposes the hollowness of her writings mercilessly. That helps her make up her mind about her literary career. Then, Indu has an extra – marital affair with Naren. It proves but an episode in her life as Naren passes away soon. But the affair makes her

conscious of the fact that a woman need not be ashamed of her sexuality and hide it. She realizes her mistake in trying to do, speak, dress and behave the way it pleases Jayant. It amounts to a denial of her identity which is neither pleasing nor honourable.

Once she realizes that it is no use hiding her own feelings or feel ashamed of them, or to behave the way her husband or others like, it becomes easy for her to solve her personal problems. She gains the courage to tell Jayant that she is going to resign from her job and start the kind of writing she always wanted to do. That is, she will not write what is acceptable, popular and easily sold but what comes out of her inner self.

Then, she reveals her strengths and weaknesses to her husband and the result is positive and promising according to her own admission:

“There is an ease in our relationship that was not there before. If my feelings have cooled down to some extent.....I have gained something else in return. I no longer fight my need of him. I am not ashamed of it. I know it does not make me less of a human being.”

(RS 12,13)

Akka has placed her in somewhat peculiar condition by leaving all her money to her. She has remained so hostile to Akka for a long time and despises the family as mean and despicable. Under the circumstances, she can use that money either to enrich herself or give it to strangers. Hatred suggests both of these courses to her but her mind eventually leads her to decide otherwise. She

feels bound by an obligation and to fulfil that she must be hard. So she takes decisions which are not very pleasant to her kith and kin but in practice benefit them. She decides to pay for Mini's wedding and the family house is sold to a promoter. The money obtained from the sale is distributed in a way that enables all to have small houses of their own. Sharad prospers in his hotel business. Atya, the childless widow comes to live with Indu and Jayant and adjusts herself well in course of time. Though nobody favoured the idea of spending money for an outsider like Vithal, Indu recognizes his merit and Vithal is one of the first to benefit from Akka's trust.

The above analysis reveals certain facts about social progress. We have to recognise that resistance to change is generally strong. Women of the second generation are as conservative and superstitious as Akka. At the same time, even the most conservative are compelled to concede to the demands of the age. Thus, Akka cannot shut her eyes to the necessity of sending the girls of the family to college as boys want to marry graduate girls. Govind belonging to the second generation marries inter – caste and Indu, his daughter does likewise. Sumitra is convent educated and proud of her 'culture'. By the third generation we find that adult marriages have replaced child marriages and the girls are striving to assert their choice and confronting the problems of their sexuality. Love marriages and inter – caste marriages are leading them a step ahead but they are also bringing before them new challenges of adjustment with male prejudices and assertion of their own

identity. The novel also shows that women need not blame men for all problems as at least some of them arise from their own silence, deception and self denial practised in pursuit of their goal of becoming the 'ideal Indian woman.'

In *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1990), Saru's grandmother represents the first generation of women. We do not learn much about her. Her husband disappears all of a sudden and a family legend excuses her with the claim that he has taken Sanyas. This happens only a few years after marriage and she is left helpless with two little daughters. The young woman returns to her natal house. Her father looks after her and her daughters and gets the two daughters married when they attain the marriageable age according to the tradition. She realizes that she is an unwanted burden in that house and does not complain. She blames her own luck for all her sufferings. That is how the deprived, the oppressed and the helpless have ever accepted their fate. The deserted are no exception to that.

Mothers of Saru, Madhav and Sudhir comprise the second generation of women in the novel. Madhav's mother is an old – fashioned woman who wears nine yard saris. She is the wife of a poor Brahmin who cannot afford to buy good clothes. Even if there is some money, she comes last and her husband despises people who take too much interest in clothes. So she remains content with what she gets. A wide gulf separates her husband from her and her children. They dare not discuss anything with him and he prefers to impose his

own will on them. As a result of this communication gap he remains unaware of his son Satish's craze for movies and his threat to run away. And when Satish disappears he holds her responsible for it and punishes her by refusing to eat anything cooked by her. Thus she is deprived of a chance to serve her husband which is believed to be the first duty of a woman according to the tradition. So "Madhav's mother considers it a punishment". (DHNT 56)

To us, the behaviour appears quite irrational and unjust. To a rational being, it is the duty of both the parents to look after and guide their children properly. It cannot be left to the mother alone. Moreover, a man who makes himself inaccessible to his wife and children cannot blame his wife for a mishap. He ought to blame and penalize himself instead.

Sudhir's mother was formerly a plump, placid and motherly woman Saru liked. She had five children of her own but enough affection to spare for Saru, her neighbour's daughter. She chatted with Saru as she combed the latter's hair and plaited them tight. Saru was very fond of her. In her old age, she changed physically and mentally. She had diabetes but refused to diet.

All "the old affection, the interest, the curiosity" was gone. "She lived in her own world of querulous complaints, carrying on a perennial warfare against her son and daughter in law, seeing the world in black and white, she, the wronged, the others, the wrong doers." (DHNT 191)

She is representative of an emotional type of woman who fails to adjust with the reality in old age, who resents the loss of the power and importance they had in the family earlier, who view the young as usurpers. She belongs to the mass of the weak, the lonely, the defeated, the forsaken, the unhappy who has lost all interest in life and considers Saru's mother lucky as she died and got rid of her suffering.

Saru's mother had an unhappy childhood. After her father's desertion, she was brought up along with her sister in her grandfather's house, where she realized they were not accepted but were merely tolerated. That experience affected her personality and made her a silent and dour woman. As she felt unwanted and insecure in childhood, she sought power later to avoid further oppression. Moreover, she accepted the traditional idea of woman's inferiority and the preference for a male child with a bias against the female child. She discriminated between her son and her daughter in their upbringing which aroused Saru's resentment and hostility. She was a typical Indian mother who wanted to prepare her daughter for her in-law's house by making her modest and submissive. As Saru did not like that, she grew bitter.

She was old fashioned. Fond of her son, Dhruva, she pampered him. His birthday was celebrated with zeal but it was only during the haldi – kumkum ceremony that the daughter "became more important than Dhruva."

(DHNT 144)

When Dhruva was drowned accidentally she held Saru responsible for the mishap. Later she shows her preference for male child with her kindness for Madhav, a boy unrelated to her.

As a woman's independence was something beyond her wildest dreams, she opposed Saru's idea of joining a medical college after she passed Inter Science.

"And don't forget, medicine or no medicine, doctor or no doctor, you still have to get her married, spend money on her wedding. Can you do both?" she asks her father. (DHNT 196)

Obviously, marriage mattered more in the life of a woman than education and career from her point of view.

Subscribing to the traditional ideas, it was but natural for her to oppose Saru's resolve to marry a man who did not belong to her caste. Manohar was the son of a cycle – shop keeper and belonged to a lower caste.

"You won't be happy with him. I know you won't. A man of a different caste, different community.....what will you have in common?" she argued. (DHNT 108)

Belonging to the same caste, same community was the only factor that assured success and happiness in married life according to her. She had nothing but distrust for love marriages.

One of the characteristic features of her nature is uncompromising, unforgiving attitude towards her daughter. As Saru defied her, she would not forgive her.

When Prof. Kulkarni attempted reconciliation after Saru's marriage, Kamala said:

"Daughter? I don't have any daughter. I had a son and he died. Now I am childless."(DHNT 118)

Even when he was dying, she refused to go to her daughter. She turned down the request of Sudhir's mother with a similar retort:

"What daughter? I have no daughter."(DHNT 117)

She is equally irrational in subscribing to the myth of the self sacrificing martyred woman and destroys herself by her meaningless modesty. Though she was suffering from cancer during her last days, she did not ask her husband to consult a doctor. She had become thin and ate little but kept quiet for long. Even when Sudhir's mother asked her husband to consult a doctor, she resisted. Madhav succeeded in persuading her at last but it was too late. She died at Goregaon.

The third generation in the novel is represented by Sarita (Saru), Smita, Vidya, Nalu etc. Sarita is the protagonist while the rest are minor characters. These minor characters are mentioned in passing but need not be deemed insignificant for that reason. In fact, they reveal the general trend, the way most of the women even today live.

Smita, Vidya and Nalu are Sarita's friends. Vidya had an indescribable passion for theatre before marriage. But she changes after marriage. Her husband and his family disapprove of her acting, directing or anything alike and so she gives up acting to please them. She is sophisticated and remains slim even after she becomes a mother. Thus we find that she sacrifices her career, interest and talent for the sake of peace in her married life.

Smita, a talkative girl introduces Sarita to Maohar in her college days. Later, she marries and becomes Geetanjali or Anju, the names given to her by her husband. As her husband does not like the name Smita and gets very annoyed if someone uses it, she too has accepted the drastic change in her identity. She has surrendered herself so much to her husband that she cannot spare time for her friends as long as he stays with her. As Nalu puts it, she just tags on to him and drifts like a "small boat towed by a larger ship". (DHNT121)

Apparently Smita is a happy wife and mother but she has become dependent on her husband who gives her a meagre sum for her expenses. Thus, when she comes to attend her nephew's thread ceremony, she has just enough to buy a small gift for the boy. She stays at her brother's house with her three children for about a month. So she finds it necessary to buy a sari for her sister – in – law. Her husband, however, is not considerate enough to tolerate her demand for money for such a purpose. So she borrows money from Sarita. She tells her, she will save a bit from household expenses and return the money as

soon as she can. This assertion of the desire to return the money serves to restore her equality with her friend.

She has become bulky after her marriage but her nature has not changed even after the birth of three children. Her habit of "nudging, pinching, giggling and clutching" has remained and "her capacity to invest every remark with a lewd implication" has "become gross vulgarity". (DHNT 168,169)

Sarita does not fail to notice that marriage has not changed her basically or really. Even earlier, she practiced "lying at home about where she went and what she did, getting money from her mother and splashing it in the canteen". (DHNT 45) So the roots of her degradation do not lie in marriage, it has got to be sought in her nature.

Nalu is the other friend of Sarita mentioned in the novel. Unlike Smita and Sarita, she studies Arts in College. She remains a spinster, devoted to her job. She dislikes the custom that empowers husband to change the name given to his wife by her parents. The custom is so common in Maharashtra and women like Smita do not find fault with it but Nalu with an independent mind finds it simply intolerable.

So she tells Smita:

"Well, I refuse to call you Anju or Geetanjali or whatever. To me you are Smita and will always be Smita". (DHNT 62)

Unlike Smita, Nalu has changed physically for the better. She teaches now in the college she studied earlier. She is well – dressed though simple,

dignified and confident. However, she appears overbearing and dramatic with a conviction of her own rightness. Bitterness has replaced her former endearing enthusiasm. She complains about her brother and his family with whom she lives, her students and colleagues, the college authorities, politicians, the government and what not. The case of Nalu shows that the freedom a spinster wins in the society is hardly a guarantee of her satisfaction in personal and social life.

Mrinal, Madhav's younger sister, is the other minor character of the novel. She belongs to a poor family and lives in a village where she cannot expect basic amenities like running water. She has to fetch water, look after the kids and help her mother. Life in a village is monotonous to her. The adolescent girl reads stories of love which bring romantic dreams to her. She dreams some boy will fall in love with her and rescue her out of the village. She is unhappy as her father does not care to know what she wants, though he is in the lookout for a groom for her.

Sarita, the protagonist of the novel experiences gender bias early in her life. Though first born of her parents, she feels hurt as her parents pay more attention to her brother Dhruva. They rejoiced on his birth and celebrated his naming day. His birthdays are always occasions of rituals and rejoicing while her birthday is barely acknowledged. Then, her brother is allowed to move freely but her mother forbids her to go in the sun lest she gets darker and have less chances of getting married. Early in her life, she has to leave her parents'

house after marriage unlike her brother. Thus the natal house is but a temporary resort to a girl child and she is taught to prepare for it early in life. That is what makes her dislike the traditional views and develops rebellious attitude in her.

She reacts to these early experiences in two ways. First of all, her parents' blatant favouritism towards her brother provokes sibling jealousy in her. Though her brother is fond of her and confides his secrets to her, she treats him rather rudely. The boy is afraid of the dark and does not dare to confess it to his mother who asks him to sleep alone in a room. So he crawls into his sister's bed secretly. But his touch is distasteful to her and she seeks to avoid it.

As the girl child is left to the care of her mother and it is not the business of the father to interfere, the mother seeks to teach and enforce social norms which discriminate between boys and girls. Thus she becomes the spokesperson of and almost identified with gender discrimination. Hence, the hostility. The hostility goes to the extent that she says:

“If you're a woman, I don't want to be one”. (DHNT 40)

She resents the fact that a growing up girl is engulfed with a kind of shame and treated as an untouchable during periods.

The mother daughter relation deteriorates further when Dhruva, a boy of seven, dies accidentally and the mother accuses the daughter of killing her brother. Then, their interests collide when Saru decides to study medicine instead of, going for B.Sc. Opposing it vehemently, Saru's mother argues with her father:

“...don’t forget, medicine or no medicine, doctor or no doctor, you still have to get her married, spend money on her wedding. Can you do both? Make yourself pauper, and will she look after you in your old age?Let her go for a B. Sc.....you can get her married in two years and our responsibility will be over.” (DHNT 80)

Saru, however, wins the battle as her father agrees to support her financially despite his meagre resources. Saru’s decision to marry Manohar (alias Manu) deals the final blow to the mother – daughter relationship. Manu is a non – Brahmin and his father owns a cycle shop. Saru’s mother strictly adheres to the caste rules and inter caste marriages are an anathema to her. She is averse to love marriages too. She seriously holds that marriages between persons between different castes and communities never succeed. That is why she tells Saru: “I know all these ‘love marriages’. It’s love for a few days, then quarrels all the time”. (DHNT 70) As Saru defies and leaves natal house to marry the man of her choice, her mother declares herself childless, curses Saru and remains biased to her till the end of her life.

Married life is not devoid of problems for Sarita. She has yet to build up her career and her husband, contrary to all aspirations and expectations of the college days, has ended up a lecturer in a third rate college. So she has to live at first at a place which is far from charming: “the corridors smelling of urine, the rooms with their dank sealed-in odours, women with inquisitive,

unfriendly eyes, men with lascivious stares.” (DHNT 184) Despite all that, love makes her happy.

An MBBS degree does not bring prosperity to her all of a sudden. She advances by degrees, passes MD and gets a consulting room of her own at last with the help of her teacher Boozie. Gradually she wins recognition in society and the standard of living rises. It brings material well – being to the family and it also makes her the main provider in the family. Dependence on her goes to the extent that her husband cannot even think of Sarita stopping her work.

Success brings trouble for Sarita in its train. What makes her inches taller makes her husband inches shorter. Gradually she becomes known as a doctor in the locality, not merely the wife of Manohar. The prosperity which her success brings enables him to enjoy a holiday in Ooty and feel proud of and lucky in being the husband of a doctor. But his vanity is rudely hurt when an interviewer from an women's magazine asks him:

“How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?” (DHNT 137)

He turns a sadist and attacks her cruelly in the bed at night though behaves like a normal gentleman during the day.

Unlike her grandmother, Sarita cannot endure her misfortune passively. She is rational and not a fatalist being. She knows that human beings play a role in making and unmaking what happens to them and to others around

them. But there are two factors that stand in her way of deciding. First of all, she has got two children besides neighbours around and she cannot quarrel with her husband and create a scene lest they come to know it. Secondly, she suffers from a deep rooted guilt complex which incapacitates her to a large extent.

The guilt complex arises from a feeling that she has not been fair and kind to her brother Dhruva. She exercised absolute dictatorship. While he was "completely loyal", she was "running away from him. Avoiding him." (DHNT 97) Moreover, though she did not kill him, she had taken her to that place on his insistence where he drowned accidentally. Had she not gone there, the accident would not have been taken place, she thinks.

Secondly, she feels she has wronged her mother and she wronged her husband too. She wronged her mother by deserting her and she wronged her husband by hurting his ego, by making him appear shorter in people's eyes by earning more. Her suffering seems expiation for those sins. Despite her education and ability for reasoning, she retains a belief in curses and thinks her mother's curses have brought misery to her. Her agony is multiplied by the fact that she cannot share her feelings with anyone around her.

She has observed a lot about the condition of women in the society (how they are treated and how they behave) which makes her uneasy. She has observed that husbands of successful women like herself care to introduce their wives to their friends and the acquaintance with complacency as if they were a proud possession while they are totally ignored in general. Complacency,

however, does not mean happiness. Male ego generally finds satisfaction and pleasure in inequality, that is, inequality in favour of the husband. She has observed her friends like Smita and Vidya submitting totally to their husbands while Nalu who refuses to submit has remained spinster and grown bitter. Obviously she cannot follow them. Her nature forbids her to surrender but there is something that places her in indecision.

Her profession has brought her in contact with women who destroy themselves by their meaningless modesty confining their complaints to themselves. Such women do not "arouse either her pity or her admiration." (DHNT 29) Neither does she belong to the type of women who are satisfied with motherhood and expect nothing more. If she gives up her practice and becomes dependent on her husband to satisfy his ego, her husband will not accept it as it will affect their standard of living and upset their plans. She considers taking legal measures against her husband for his sadist behaviour. However, she cannot proceed as she has been trying all along to make her marriage a success. As her mother told her the marriage was doomed to fail, she wants to make it a success at any cost. That is why she has been doing all she can to please her husband. That is, however, neither honourable nor easy when the husband turns a sadist.

It is at that juncture that she learns about the death of her mother and decides to go to her father. As she feels isolated and badly in need of advice and mental support from someone reliable, she avails of the opportunity. She

remembers the role her father played when she wanted to study medicine.

Though he was a weak person who left his wife in command most of the time, he helped Sarita against her at that time and that enabled her to pursue her course. So she hopes he may prove helpful to her again.

Her hope is not belied. When she tells him the truth, he advises her to discuss the matter with her husband and do something about it and not leave it as it is. He also suggests that perhaps her husband needs a psychiatric treatment. He makes it clear to her that nothing can be done unless she makes up her mind. Nobody can help her until she gathers strength to take a decision.

He removes her guilt complex too. He tells her that Dhruva's death was an accident and she was not responsible for it. Moreover, she need not feel guilty for deserting her mother because "that is natural. You have to get away from your parents sometime, haven't you?" (DHNT 22)

As soon as she gets rid of her guilt complex, her self confidence is restored and she becomes ready to face her husband. Thus unlike Dhruva who died at seven, she grows up

"to know that the dark holds no terrors. That the terrors are inside us all the time. We carry them within us, and like the traitors they spring out, when we least expect them, to scratch and maul."
(DHNT 35-36)

That realisation brings strength to her mind and prepares her well to face the hard realities of life.

The Dark Holds No Terror is thus not only a protest against the subordinate position of women in society. It does not end with lashing out on the male vanity which feels offended when women gain prominence at home. It also reveals the weaknesses of the women – their irrational modesty, their adoration of and sole concern with motherhood, their willing submission to their husbands by sacrificing their own interests, etc. Women suffer a lot in our society but Shashi Deshpande thinks they cannot deny their share of the responsibility for those sufferings. They too play a role in upholding social inequality and perpetuating it with their meekness and submission, with their inhibitions and complexes.

It ought to be mentioned here that Shashi Deshpande has stressed the psychological aspect of the social problem, namely, the secondary position of women. But there is also a material aspect of it which is hardly noticed by her. Why does a woman sacrifice her interests to a man? Is it mostly because she is dependent on him? Why does a woman seldom complain about her illness? Mostly because of poverty, mostly because she is not the earner in the family nor is likely to become one and when the resources are meagre, she deems it better to leave them for earners or prospective earners. So removal of poverty and material independence of women are evidently the preconditions of social equality. Psychology cannot take the place of economy, whatever its importance in solving the problems of individuals in some cases.

We find women of several generations in *That Long Silence* (1989) too. Aiji, grandmother of Jaya represents the first one. She is dead long before the story of the novel begins and we get only pieces of information about her. She lived the austere life of a traditional Hindu widow. She had shaved her head, had no possessions but the two saris she wore, sat on the bare ground and slept on a straw mat at night. The bed in her room had no mattress and served as a memorial to her husband after his death. There were two chairs in the room for male guests but they had no cushions and they had "nails that came out to pierce and hurt." (TLS 37-38)

That self – denying woman was the head of the family and controlled all the affairs of the family sitting in her bare room. She called out her sons, daughters and grand children to her room frequently and instructed them. Everybody obeyed her.

Though she was affectionate, she was a stern mother – in – law. She would not ignore Shanta kaki's neglect of her youngest hydro – cephalic son. Jaya suggests that it was not neglect as such, but perhaps she kept away from her son as his sight pained her much. Her youngest son Vasu was her best loved one but he left her and decided to live separate in order to avoid conflict between his mother and his wife.

As a traditional woman, she did not expect arguments, doubts or questions from the young ones, particularly from the girls. Young women ought to be submissive, she thought. Otherwise, they would prove sources of trouble

to their husbands and make their own lives unhappy. Total submission to the husband's will was the key to success in marriage according to her. That is why she told Jaya:

“Look at you – for everything a question, for everything a retort.

What husband can be comfortable with that?” (TLS 34)

The next generation in the novel is represented by Ai, Mohan's mother, Venu (Kusum's mother) and Vanita mami. Venu was the sister of Vanita mami. Venu was the wife of a man "who never worked a day in his life" but smoked, enjoyed movies and begot a number of children (Dilip, Kusum, Shaila etc.). As she was neither educated nor intelligent, she could not think of family planning and left everything to fate. Hers was the mind of a defeated and dejected woman who became gradually removed from the world around her. She seemed quite astonished to see guests in her house. Similarly, she looked at her own children. While she attended to her youngest baby, the rest of her kids ran around wild abandon, unkempt, dirty and unfed. The case of Venu demonstrates how frequent, uncontrolled motherhood tells upon the physical and mental health of women, besides subjecting them to poverty.

Mohan's mother presents even more tragic a figure. Her husband was a cruel, insensitive man who cared little for his wife and children. He came to house late at night and demanded fresh rice and chutney without fail. So she had to cook rice for the second time for him. He would create scenes at the slightest omission on her part. Then she had to bear children time and again.

She had five living children and she had lost four or five. That meant a lot of work. So it affected not only her health but hampered prospects of her having children too. Prema had to stay away from school when Sudha was born. When Prema got married, Vimla had to help her mother in the kitchen though it left no time for studies. Had Vimla complained, her father would have asked her to stop going to school. Mohan's mother suffered all that in silence until she could not. Then she resorted to abortion which ended her life. To Mohan who expects a woman to bear her lot stoically, her mother was tough as a woman in those days.

Rightly does she find instead

"a despair so great that it would not voice itself.....a struggle so bitter that silence was the only weapon. Silence and surrender."

(TLS 101)

Indeed it is a travesty of truth to discover virtue in such utter helplessness and to glorify it. Only insensitive people dare do that.

Vanita mami is a passive acceptor in the novel. Her husband Chandu mama aspired to become F.R.C.S. as his mother desired but ended a small town doctor. Chandu mama neglected his wife and had shoddy affairs with all kinds of women. Vanita mami was awkward and incompetent as a housewife. Vanita mami was a loser, a failure all her life. She had no choice in her married life as she was always dominated by her mother – in – law who went to the extent of choosing her saris. When that dominating woman died, Ai replaced her. She

was childless and favoured the unfortunate daughter of her sister (Kusum). Bound to tradition, she got up early in the morning and performed *tulsi puja* and even though her marriage had been a failure, she adhered to the age old notions and said to Jaya: "Remember Jaya, a husband is like a sheltering tree." (TLS 93 – 94)

Late in her life she became aggressive and revolted against the twenty year long domination of Ai, her sister – in – law. Then, she developed cancer in her uterus but refused to undergo surgical operation. It was a case of not simply false sense of modesty but also of utter despair.

Ai, Vanita's sister – in – law and Jaya's mother belongs to the same generation. Like most of the traditional women, she favours sons. Pampered by her, her younger son Ravi becomes deceitful at an early age. Instead of correcting him, she expected Jaya to "act the protective, loving elder sister with Ravi." (TLS 44) As usual in a patriarchal society, Ai deems it necessary to take special note of the movements of the girl child. Jaya resents it and complains to her elder brother: "She behaves as if she owns me". (TLS 106) That turns Jaya hostile to her mother and the impressions she gives of her mother is highly unfavourable. It, however, seems true that she liked dominating. First she dominated her daughter and then her sister – in – law Vanita until the latter turned a rebel as noticed above.

Jaya finds several faults with her all of which need not be taken seriously. Thus her disparaging remark about "Ai's laughter, gay and girlish,

even after she was made desolate by widowhood" seems unkind and prejudiced. It suggests that Ai's emotions were not deep enough even in relation to her husband. There is hardly anything in the novel to bear out the suggestion. Moreover, it betrays Jaya's adherence to the false patriarchal notion that a widow has no right to laugh, to appear cheerful. We may well explain her laughter as an indication of her high level of endurance and self-control.

Jaya thinks with contempt of "Ai's slapdash ways, and of how she could not even hem properly." She takes her to task as, "She had prepared for none of the duties of a woman's life." (TLS 28) Such thoughts, however, are a product of specific circumstances. Such thoughts came to her when she had perceived the women of Mohan's family as models of perfection and contrasted them to her mother. The perception proves wrong subsequently. Moreover, Jaya contradicts herself by accusing her mother. When her mother had attempted to prepare her for the traditional roles of women, she had protested against "unreasonable demands" and "prying questions." After marriage with Mohan, she herself subscribes to the sexist bias and attempts to become a good conformist.

Ai's opposition to Jaya's marriage with Mohan seems to be one of the factors that affects their relation. As Mohan was good looking, demanded no dowry and the marriage would take her away from the dull life at Ambegaon, Jaya was keen to accept the suggestion of her elder brother, uncles and Chandu mama. But Ai objected to it as Mohan's family seemed "orthodox, old –

fashioned people" who had a "shabby house". Part of it seems true, though not the whole of it. Ai's remarks show she thought highly of her family and found others much below her standard.

Her air of superiority often landed her in self contradiction, rather hypocrisy. She boasted that her children were taught never to scorn any food, but she forgot it conveniently at her sister – in – law Vanita's house:

"...Ai, acting the great lady, sat primly toying with her food. 'Don't eat that stuff', she would hiss at me, 'it's no good'. She herself left most of it on her plate..." (TLS 28)

Similarly hypocritical is her belated adoration for her brother Makarand who was scorned as long as he was alive for choosing the career of a cine actor. But when she inherits his flat, she started spinning a myth. She claims to have recognized the merit of her brother and prodded her husband to help him. That is totally false because Appa "had helped Makarand mama stealthily" (TLS 51)

Had she been prodding to help Makarand, there would be no question of helping him "stealthily".

In her old age, she feels isolated as both her sons left her after their father's death. Then she turns to Jaya and becomes "childishly possessive" of her. That is untimely and unwanted as she had ignored her daughter when the latter needed her love. That too is characteristic of what happens often to not a few women in our society.

Amma is superstitious and believes in portents and omens. While living in Saptagiri, sometimes she heard a confused cry of a bird and became terrified. She "claimed that it was this unnatural sound that had given her a premonition of Appa's death." (TLS 163) Such beliefs are so common in Indian society and even educated people are not entirely free from them.

The third generation comprises of a number of women differing a lot in intellect, education and social status. With their success and failure, prosperity and poverty, brilliance and dullness they symbolize the diversity in Indian society in the latter part of the twentieth century. Jaya, Nayana, Kusum, Jeeja, Mukta, Veena, Sujata, Prema, Sudha and Vimla are the characters to name them.

Nayana, the sweeper, belongs to the lowest stratum of them. Her mother dreamt of a house with electricity and water, shining brass vessels, a silver waist chain, silver anklets etc. The dream did not materialize. Her husband like her fathers and brothers was a waster, good – for – nothing and drunkard. Like her mother – in – law she was pregnant very often. She had four children, two girls and two sons. The sons died while the daughters survived. Then she became pregnant again. Her husband did not help her when her eldest daughter was sick and she had to pawn her silver anklets to provide medical care to her.

When Nayana became pregnant for the fifth time, her husband threatened to throw her out if she had another daughter. She rebuked him for

that boldly but she too had a preference for a male child despite the fact that her father, brothers and husband (the men so close to her) had proved worthless. Her preference was based not on the consideration of merit, but something else. She put it best in her conversation with Jaya:

"Why give birth to a girl, behnji, who'll only suffer because of men all her life? Look at me!" (TLS 180)

Jeeja, the maid servant of Jaya too belongs to the lower stratum of the society. She is a realist, purely professional and single minded. Unlike Nayana, she is not curious. She does her work in silence and perfectly. She needs money and works well to earn it. She has a reputation for reliability which enables her to earn more than other servants. Jaya mistakes her silence for hostility or reluctance but discovers soon the reality.

Jeeja knows it well that endurance is badly needed by people like her for survival. As her husband is a waster, she asks Jaya at the very beginning not to give the whole or part of her salary to her husband. She is rarely absent. Sometimes she is bruised and hurt when she comes to work but she does not complain about her husband's misbehaviour.

Jeeja's husband had a good job and lived in a decent room in a chawl. He lost it during a strike, found refuge in a slum and became a drunkard. So it was not his fault. Nor does she blame him for remarrying as she could bear no children. The second marriage gives him two children, including a son. Jeeja's co – wife dies soon after the birth of the son, and Jeeja brings up her step –

children. After the death of her husband, her step son steps into the shoes of his father. He drinks and beats up his wife while Jeeja shoulders all – the responsibility of Rajaram's wife, Tara and his three children. She introduces her daughter – in – law and her granddaughter to the *batatawada* business so that the family can make a living honourably. She blames her fate instead of any person for his sufferings but that belief does not make her incapable of facing the challenges of life. She confronts them boldly and inspires others to do likewise. She is one of the heroic figures of the working class who remain unsung, unwept and unhonoured all the time. We are relieved to some extent to learn that all of her efforts have not gone in vain. Manda, the daughter of her step son have acquired the ability to read magazines and to comprehend questions put in English to answer them in Marathi.

It is but natural for Jeeja to scold Tara when she curses her husband: "Stop that! Don't forget, he keeps the kumkum on your forehead. What is woman without that?" (TLS 39) A husband even if worthless and troublesome cannot be cursed according to the norms of patriarchy. Merely the fact that the husband is living is supposed to be a great merit to a woman. Jeeja subscribes to those norms.

There is an incident in the novel which reveals the self respect of the poor woman. Her step son is injured and admitted in the hospital. Jaya offers her money but she asks her instead to talk to Dr. Vyasa so that the patient is treated properly. Jaya's evaluation of Jeeja is worth quoting here:

"All those happy womenwere of no use to me. It was Jeeja and her like I needed; it was these women who saved me from the hell of drudgery. Any little freedom I had depended on them." (TLS 22)

That is true about all the women of the well – to – do section of the society, they are relieved of drudgery as other women take the trouble for them.

Mukta is a neighbour of Jaya and a helpful one at that. When Jaya had high fever and delirium, she looks after her with her daughter Nilima and Manda all the night. She expects people to practice what they profess. In this connection she recalls a bitter experience of her childhood. As her father belonged to Hindu Mahasabha, he had to go into hiding to escape the mob fury after the death of Mahatma Gandhi and his shop was looted. All that they did in the name of Gandhi who preached truth and non – violence. So Mukta believes that human nature proves more powerful than the lofty ideals preached and professed by people.

Mukta is a widow. Her husband Arun did not have many friends. He fell out of a train and died. Kamat was one of the few friends he had. After Arun's death, Mukta was at a loss to decide what to do. She had a daughter, Nilima to look after. Her father did not like the idea of her going out to get a job. But Mukta thought otherwise. She deemed it wise to become self reliant even for the sake of her daughter; Kamat encouraged her and so she did her teacher's training and got a job. She is grateful to Kamat for his advice and encouragement.

Her education and experience have given her a sane view of human relations. She does not think it is scandalous on the part of a married woman to attend a lonely man who is already dead or about to die. That is why she takes Jaya to task for leaving Kamat alone at the final moment. A modern woman ought to be more courageous and confident in social relations in her opinion.

Human behaviour is not rational all along. People retain part of irrational behaviour by habit or by submission to traditional norms. That is true about Mukta too. Irrationality in her case consists of fasting. She has more days of fasting than days she takes normal diet. Generally, women resort to self mortification to avoid widowhood. But as she is a widow now, her fasts seem meaningless to Jaya. Even her daughter Nilima finds her fasts “stupid” calls her “horribly old – fashioned” and asks her to give them up.

Vimala, Mohan’s sister differs from her mother as she remains childless. But she is not different in suffering in silence. She has an ovarian tumour with metastases in the lungs. She remains confined to her bed over a month. Her mother – in – law dismisses it as a lot of fuss about 'heavy periods'. Finally, when Mohan and Jaya take her to the hospital, the doctor is incredulous about the patient's silence despite so much suffering. As it is too late, the doctor cannot help and she dies. Vimala's case illustrates the ignorance, prejudice and neglect that surround women's health problems even today. Going to doctors and hospitals is still deemed an aberration by the elderly women and the young

women have to suffer in silence and die. That is monstrous but true for a considerable number of families even today.

Kusum is the other tragic figure in the novel that deserves mention. She is Vanita's sister's daughter. The novelist calls her "a poor, frightened, defeated woman" which describes her aptly. She grows conscious of her femaleness early at the age of thirteen. Both her parents are feckless, hopeless. Her father remains idle, smokes and watches movies while her mother attends her youngest baby and leaves the rest of her kids dirty and unfed. That seals Kusum's fate.

Kusum is married, bears three daughters but loses sanity and is abandoned by her husband. Vanita mami asks Kusum to teach her English, to find a better job for her husband and get her treated by a good doctor. Jaya is concerned about her but their plans do not materialize. Kusum wants to see her children. The youngest of them is nearly ten and with the exception of Lata, they despise Kusum. Still, she goes to her in-laws, stays there for a few days and then throws herself in a well and dies. Nobody cares about her except Vanita mami and Jaya. The case of Kusum shows what drives women to insanity and how cruel the society is to such women.

Kusum is not a creation of the novelist's imagination. Whether at home or at mental asylums, mentally deranged people seldom find sympathetic treatment. They are useless to their relations and even their near and dear ones despise them. Sometimes they are sent to mental hospitals and their family

refuses to get them back even when they regain mental balance. Not long ago newspapers reported the story of an unfortunate man of Murshidabad who committed suicide in despair for the same reason. Then we read about a mental hospital in Kolkata where female patients were kept naked and were not looked after properly. That sounds incredible in the twenty first century but remains true nevertheless.

Jaya, the protagonist of the novel grows up in an environment which is a queer mixture of tradition and modernity. Her father wanted to make her different from other girls who aspired for nothing more than being wives and mothers. She too had dreams of getting higher education and excelling in intellectual achievement. Those dreams did not materialize as her father died when she was just fifteen. But Jaya is no less exposed to traditional beliefs. There are women around her like Vanita mami who asks her to remember that a husband is like a sheltering tree. There are also men like Ramu kaka who bring before her the reality that the present social set – up makes women non entities in the family of their parents on the excuse that they belong to their husband's families. In reality they find no place in the family tree of their husbands either. Living at Saptagiri with her Ajji, she learns that cooking and cleaning up are exclusively female operations. That is why her cousins Veena and Sujata clean up by turn but not the boys Jaanu or Sridhar. It is deemed ludicrous to suggest otherwise.

Her father had sent her along with her brothers to a convent despite his mother's disapproval as learning good English was "going to be more useful to them than being good Brahmins." (TLS 15-16)

Her education gives her command of English but her social background seems to prevail upon her thinking. However, her ability to speak good English attracts Mohan Kulkarni who wants an educated, cultured wife. The marriage takes place smoothly in the conventional way as Mohan comes of a good Brahmin family and he is good looking too. Moreover, as he demands no dowry, Jaya's guardians are relieved of their financial liability. Jaya has an extra reason for marrying Mohan: it will provide her an opportunity to get away from Ambegaon, a place she does not like. It is an arranged marriage, a marriage arranged by Jaya's elder brother. Later, she observes that Mohan's role, his decision has been the main factor, she has only acquiesced.

As customary in some communities, Jaya gets a new name Suhasini from her husband. While Jaya stands for victory, Suhasini means "a soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman. A woman who lovingly nurtured her family. A woman who coped." Thus the new name is indicative of what Mohan expects from her, the role she has to play. Initially, she is zealous to play that role. As she rates her mother and maternal aunt low and wanting in their performance as house wife and mother, she seeks her models in Mohan's family. She discovers there "how sharply defined a woman's role" is. The women of his family are a revelation to her and she tries to learn what is

womanly and what is unwomanly from them. There she learns that it is unwomanly for a woman to be angry, that she has to suffer in silence, that she has to sacrifice her interest, her hobbies and her career for the sake of her husband and family.

She applies what she has learnt to the extent possible. To please her husband, she decides to conform to his idea of a modern woman and changes her appearance by cutting her hair, wearing dark glasses and getting completely absorbed into the family fold. Her desperate bid to perform the role of a perfect wife and a loving and caring mother relegates her identity to the background. It makes her not an independent woman but a "stereo type of a woman – nervous, incompetent, needing male help and support." (TLS 17) But as Kamat observes, the exercise affects the members of the family too:

"Making others dependent on you. It increases your sense of power. And that's what you really want, all you bloody looking – after – others, caring for others women." (TLS 151)

As the role of women is sharply defined in Mohan's family, Jaya does not bother about what her husband does beyond the threshold of her house. That is not supposed to be the look out of the wife according to tradition. Mohan leaves his first job at the largest steel factory of the country at Lohanagar and she believes it is an outcome of the labour unrest and strike at the plant. Much later she comes to know the truth that "not having enough money" (TLS 17) for a comfortable life is the real cause of his decision. She

remains in the dark about the means he employs to get himself posted at Bombay and to get an accommodation at Churchgate. She is unaware of Mohan's philosophy expressed much later in his own words: "Can anyone live on just a salary?" (TLS 11-12)

In her endeavour to become an ideal wife, Jaya imitates Gandhari:

"I didn't want to know anything. It was enough for me that we moved to Bombay, that we could send Rahul and Rati to good schools, that I could have the things we needed.....decent clothes, a fridge, a gas connection, travelling first class. And, there was enough for Mohan to send home to his father – for Sudha's fees, Vasant's clothes and Sudha's marriage." (TLS 191)

The blind pursuit of the traditional ideal of good wife and good mother destroys her identity. She wants to become a teacher but Mohan does not like it. Then, her creative writing is stifled by her insensitive husband. One of her short stories published in a magazine bags the first prize but Mohan feels hurt by it. That is because the story centres around: "a couple, a man who cannot reach his wife except through her body." (TLS 81)

Mohan assumes it to be a portrayal of his own life. As Jaya does not want to jeopardise her marriage, she stops writing stories after that. Then she resumes writing them again under an assumed name. They are rejected and returned to the address of her sympathetic neighbour Kamat. Discussing the rejected stories with Kamat, she finds they have become impersonal and devoid

of strong feelings. Kamat tells her it is not unbecoming on the part of a woman to be angry or to express her anger in her stories.

His criticism reveals her what is wanting in her writings:

"Share your complexes. And you're a fool if you think I am joking.....beware of this "women are victims" theory of yours. It'll drag you down into a soft, squishy bog of self-pity. Take yourself seriously, woman. Don't skulk behind a false name." (TLS 221)

Jaya dare not take a hard decision at that time. Instead she takes the safe course of columnist, writing light things Mohan appreciates and shutting her door firmly on the women screaming for attention. Mohan finds satisfaction in being the husband of a writer, but he has destroyed the potentiality of his wife as a good, meaningful author. The entire fault, however, does not rest with Mohan, she has not cared to resist and assert herself.

"Stay at home, look after your babies, keep out the rest of the world, and you're safe." (TLS 9)

That is the foolish notion she proceeds with for long seventeen years of her married life. That does not prove much helpful to her in social relations. She cannot save her cousin Kusum, she cannot win friends, she fails miserably at times in fulfilling her social obligations and above all she feels lonely. The worst example of her failure comes when she finds Kamat dead in his room lying on the floor and leaves him there and hurries to Churchgate. Kamat as her best friend and critic deserves better treatment, homage from Jaya which she

denies him for the fear of getting involved in some scandal. Thus her attempt to perform the role of a good wife causes her failure as a human being.

Her illusions are shattered at last when Mohan and his friend Agarwal become involved in a corruption case and an enquiry against them begins. At his friend's advice Mohan leaves his officially recorded residence at Churchgate and goes in hiding to the flat at Dadar, Jaya has inherited from her maternal uncle. It is only then that Jaya gets some hints of shady deals of her husband with the excuse that he has done everything for the sake of his family. Jaya suddenly bursts into laughter at his unusual behaviour. That annoys Mohan who goes away to some unannounced destination. As Jaya's two children have gone with a neighbour to spend vacation, Jaya finds herself alone in the flat. That gives her an opportunity to recollect and analyse her past, to discover her strength and weakness and to chalk out her future course of action.

Jaya's first reaction to the changed situation is:

"I know that safety is always unattainable. You're never safe." (TLS 201)

She is even more shattered by the news of the sudden disappearance of her son who has gone for holidaying with family friends. Later she is relieved as she learns about the whereabouts of her son and receives a telegram from Mohan to the effect that all is well. Before they return she is left to herself in the flat and pours out her suppressed feelings, fears and doubts.

Mohan's excuse for all his questionable deeds is that he has done everything for his family. Pondering over it, Jaya remembers the folk tale about the sparrow and the crow and concludes that selfish, cynic behaviour even for the family is not excusable. As for her own role, she realizes that her own role all along has been passive. Time and again, she has associated marriage with the image of "two bullocks yoked together" and concluded that under the circumstances they must move in the same direction because moving in different directions will be painful. The image is no doubt valid regarding the nature of traditional marriage. But it does not follow that the wife must remain passive. Marriage can better mean partnership with both partners sharing the burden (that is, the responsibilities) equally and consulting the other. Male arrogance may prove an arrogance in the way but it need not become an excuse for unquestioning submission. Silence cannot save women from disaster and they are partly to blame for it as their silence prolongs and deepens their sufferings. That is why Kamat rejects 'the women are the victims' theory. Thus she realizes she cannot evade responsibility for the mishap that has befallen her family.

The other thing that her reflections bring to her mind is the personality of an individual in an integrated whole. It cannot be reduced to pieces, some to be suppressed and some to be played up. Jaya commits a blunder when she tries to suppress her social being, her individuality and to confine herself to the role

of Mohan's wife and the mother of their two children. That dispels her misgivings and restores her confidence.

So she declares at last:

"I'm not afraid any more. The panic has gone. I'm Mohan's wife, I had thought, and cut off the bits of me that had refused to be Mohan's wife. Now I know that kind of fragmentation is not possible." (TLS 30,137)

Obviously, her married life is now destined to change as she has resolved to gain her real identity, become more than a wife and mother, namely, a social being, an individual having her own desire and her own choice and a creative writer. She is conscious of the difficulty she will face now in adjusting with her husband but she is not much perturbed about it. As she puts it:

"We don't change overnight.....But we can always hope. Without that, life would be impossible. And if there is anything I know now it is this: life has always to be made possible." (TLS 130)

What the novel highlights is that education is now becoming available to a section of women but it does not change their way of thinking automatically. Despite education, they do not shed their prejudices easily. Mohan, the engineer deems it below the dignity of a man to cook even at the hour of dire necessity. Jaya, the writer leaves no stones unturned to prove herself a good wife as demanded by tradition. Only the hard blow of the circumstances can compel them to think anew and behave in a new way.

Secondly, it emphasizes that men and women distort their identities when they ignore their social obligations and creative impulses in the name of family demands. It also shows that they get nowhere by self pitying. They have to take recourse to self examination and to become bold enough to resist undesirable pressures.

The earlier novels of Shashi Deshpande present before us the suffering of women across the generations and their desperate bid to settle things within the sphere of family. The lead women characters in these novels find themselves trapped in the claws of patriarchy, traditionality and social inhibitions. The desperate attempt of self – assertion on their part sometimes makes their lives terror – stricken. The denial to accept a given structured social life brings problems both in their family life and social life. A life with freedom, happiness, meaningfulness and creativity is a coveted dream of these female protagonists but the dream of such a life always eludes them and leaves them in the desert of barren reality.

CHAPTER VI

NEGOTIATING MODERNITY IN THE LATER NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE

The novels of Shashi Deshpande are representative of a social world of complex relations. In an interview to Geeta Gangadharan, Deshpande says

"Human relationship is what a writer is involved with person to person and person to society relationships – these are the two primary concerns of a creative writer and, to me, the former is of immense importance. My preoccupation is with interpersonal relationships and human emotions." (Pathak 1998: 252)

The quantitative as opposed to the qualitative relations have become the pre – dominant issue since the progress of science and establishment of modern nation, industrialisation etc. Modern life is infested with rules and procedures, which are often mechanically followed. In the later novels of Shashi Deshpande, the healing touch of love seems to be the barrier remover in the sphere of problems inherent in human nature. Though she accepts destiny as the ultimate factor in life's journey, yet a hope for some change is not altogether absent. In *Small Remedies*, she talks about such little healing solutions to put some ray of hope in the otherwise gloomy horizon of life. The later novels specifically herald a message of 'moving on' from the rigidity of patriarchy. This is a journey with resistance towards a better life.

The Binding Vine (1992) is a tale that encompasses four generations of women, though the first and the fourth one are not in the focus. Baiajji, the grandmother is the only woman belonging to the first generation we find in the novel. Basically she is a traditional type of woman who performs once a year Chaitra –Gouri Haldi – Kumkum. Urmi, her granddaughter remembers how she looked on that day:

"her tiny wrists encircled by heavy gold pattis, the pearl choker round her neck giving her a stiff, haughty look." (BV 132)

Such a simple woman was, however, compelled by circumstances to learn three languages besides her mother tongue. First her father made her switch to Marathi from a Kannad school as he thought it would open her chances of getting a better husband. Then she learnt Hindi in response to Gandhiji. Again after her marriage, she had to learn English as the status of her husband demanded it. An English woman Miss Grace Taylor taught her the language.

Baiajji was loving and caring to her granddaughter Urmi. Urmi reciprocated her feelings and went to the extent of preferring Baiajji's 'old or shabby' clothes to the expensive ones given by her mother. She did not mind that it made her the worst dressed child in school. When her granddaughter was twelve, she transferred her books to Urmi and awakened the passion for books in her. She was the source of wisdom and love to Urmi.

But wisdom and love did not prevent her from being cruel to the other family. She kept her husband away from 'the other family', that is his own daughters. When Baiajji's orchards were sold after her death, it was her son who persuaded him to give the money to those half – sisters of his.

Inni, Mira and Akka are the women belonging to the second generation in the novel. Inni was a beautiful, mostly self reliant and humble woman in her youth. Though her beauty is fading with age yet she retains her other characteristics. She is educated as evident from her interest in cross word puzzles. She is particular about dress and wants to see her daughter, Urmi well – dressed. She asks her daughter to keep her clothes properly and not to make a mess of them. As a loving mother, she is worried about her daughter when she comes back late. Urmi's visits to the hospital are particularly worrying to her. Sticking to the convention, she wants to get her son married to a Maharashtrian girl, preferably to her friend Malini's daughter. She gets disappointed to learn that she is going to have instead a Tamil girl Radha as her daughter – in – law.

Inni is weak and submissive by nature. No wonder her husband dominates her. The worst case of domination is his decision to remove Urmi from her mother's care and to keep her in the custody of Baiajji at Ranidurg. It is a punishment meant for Inni for leaving their baby with Diwakar, a male servant. Though Diwakar is caring, gentle and old enough and above all, better in handling a baby than Inni, he is a man and cannot be trusted with a female baby. That arbitrary step leads to a misunderstanding and embitters the

relationship of the daughter with her mother as she holds Inni responsible for neglecting her. Urmi realises the helplessness of her mother much later. Until then, 'skirmishes' between them go on.

That does not mean she is kind and fair to all. She has her limitations. Her 'real and unshakable' hostility to Bal kaka is an instance to the point. She is insensitive about what will happen to Bal kaka if the house at Ranidurg is sold. She grudges to admit even the relation as there is 'a skeleton in the family cupboard' to hide. That is Bal kaka's grandmother was Baiajji's father's mistress. Her hostility springs from her concern for family honour.

Mira, the first wife of Appa, is Kishore's mother. Born the daughter of a school teacher, she developed interest in literature early in her life and began to write as early as thirteen. Venu was a favourite poet with the young in those days. Mira appreciated his poetry and aspired to write poems like him. Venu who became recognized as one of the great poets in the course of time, was however both arrogant and a chauvinist. When she gathered courage to show him some of her poems, he said:

"Why do you need to write poetry? It is enough for young woman like you to give birth to children. Leave the other poetry to us men."

(BV 184)

Mira's studies were abruptly ended by marriage. A man saw her at a wedding, became obsessed with her, got his name suggested to Mira's parents and succeeded in getting married to her. Thus her role in the entire process was

passive even though it was going to affect her life. She was renamed Nirmala after marriage which did not please her. She denounced the custom of renaming in one of her poems:

“A tablet of rice, a pencil of gold

Can they make me Nirmala? I am Mira.” (BV 41)

Mira's husband was insensitive and tried to possess another human being against her will. The marital rape leads to pregnancy followed by miscarriage. Then she conceived again, a son Kishore was born but she died after the child birth. Married at 18, she died at 22.

Marital rape had made Mira's married life painful. She developed an intense dislike for sex, a physical repulsion from her husband. As she puts it in her diary:

"Love! How I hate the word. If this is love it is a terrible thing. I

have learnt to say 'no' at last, but it makes no difference, no

difference at all.Why can't he leave me alone?" (BV 36 – 38)

Mira was fond of books and read a variety of books, both in Kannada and English. Long after her death, her trunk was found loaded with books, notebooks, diaries and writing pads. The habit of writing she had developed continued even after marriage. As she found herself so lonely in her married life, it became an outlet for her thoughts and feelings. She expressed her thoughts in English in her diaries while she wrote poems in Kannada. One of the remarkable things about her poetry was she wrote no love poems at all.

Before her marriage, her poems dealt with the topics like the road builders, singers etc. and after the marriage they expressed her feelings aroused by the traumatic experiences of her own life. She did not win recognition for her creative writing as it remained concealed until Urmi discovered it and decided to publish it. Thus the story of Mira in the novel shows how the literary talents of women are ignored and discouraged by the chauvinists in society and it also highlights the problem of marital rape which ruins the life of many a woman.

As we read about Mira, we are painfully reminded of Simon de Beauvoir's remark about the condition of married women in society:

"The two sexes are necessary to each other, but this necessity has never brought about a condition of reciprocity between them; women, as we have seen, have never constituted a caste making exchanges and contacts with the male caste upon a footing of equality". It bears out her contention too that the aim of the institution of marriage is "to make the economic and sexual union of man and woman serve the interests of society, not assure their personal happiness." (BV 60, 26, 164)

We do not know if Mira's husband was happy with the marriage but we are sure it brought no happiness to Mira, it ruined her life.

The third generation in the novel is represented by women like Urmi, Vanaa, Prithi, Saku and Sulu. Priti, a minor character in the novel, is a film maker. She has made a film about Sati. She was in America with her parents.

Both her parents were working there and she became accustomed to living alone early in childhood. But she had to leave America eventually. Her mother had run over a number of people sleeping on the pavement during one of her annual visits in India and turned manic depressive and alcoholic. As life became impossible at home for Priti, then sixteen, she had to leave. Quite understandably, she wants to blank out the truth and in the process of hiding it makes herself a heroine. She links her decision of leaving America to the murder of Robert Kennedy:

"...I knew at that moment that I could no longer stay in a country that could suffer such pointless violence. I knew then I had to come home. It was my moment of truth." (BV 80)

That is dramatic and dishonest. As a matter of fact, she is pretentious. Though she is self – centered, she talks a lot about "her love of togetherness and family warmth and closeness." (BV 81) Vanaa rightly dismisses all that talk as phoney.

Priti claims to be a realist. She criticizes conventional movies as "so divorced from reality" and full of "male fantasies". But she herself is not so realist. That is revealed from her excitement about a judge's ruling to the effect that a wife cannot be forced into a sexual relationship with the husband against her will. The excitement is misplaced as the ruling can be appealed against and overruled and not all women can afford to go to the court. The woman who has got the ruling in her favour is an actress earning a lot of money which makes

her family willing to back her lest her husband control her money. Not all women are fortunate enough. Urmi has a better perception of reality in this respect and we cannot but endorse her contention that the laws cannot change people's lives. Something else, something more effective is needed for the purpose.

Priti learns about Mira from Urmi and decides to make a movie about her. She demands Urmi's cooperation for the purpose and expresses her willingness to pay her for it. She dismisses Urmi's objection that Mira is Kishore's mother. To her Mira is nothing but a symbol. Eventually the plan does not materialize as Urmi

"could not trust the integrity of a person who could so glibly speak of the need to know our mothers and grandmothers, yet so successfully block her own mother out of her life." (BV 141)

Thus Priti represents the wealthy, educated women who have taken acting to their real life, who care for naught else than impressing others, who have neither honesty nor any regard for the feelings of others. In the name of modernity and objectivity, they display selfishness and cynicism and thereby annoy persons who come into their contact.

Urmila (or Urmi) presents a contrast to Priti by her sensibility and commitment. She is a lecturer in a Bombay college who has planned to start research work for a doctorate degree. The death of her daughter, Anu, upsets her and it is during this emotionally disturbed state of mind that she confronts

the events described in the novel. She lives with her mother Yamini (Inni) and her six year old son, Kartik. Her husband Kishore remains away from home for long spells due to his job in merchant navy and she has to manage her own affairs independently. She is a strong willed woman capable of doing that well.

She reveals her strength even at 15 when she stays alone with the dead body of her grandfather who hanged himself. She refuses to leave the place until her father comes. Then, she falls in love with her neighbour Kishore and rushes to tell her father about it. Though her father is furious and her mother cries, she fights her battle with determination and wins. Again, we find a case of exceptional courage when she walks out on wedding night in response to Kishore's parody of a film song - "The two of us in a closed room and we can't get out". (BV 147)

As she likes an egalitarian relationship with her husband, she hates economic dependence and lives on her own earnings. All the money her husband sends her, she deposits in the bank. Even her childhood friend, Vanaa fails to understand it and says: "You're stupid....why don't you use it?" (BV 183)

Urmi's perception of a wife – husband relationship differs from that of Vanaa (who is also her sister – in – law). Vanaa's husband Harish (a doctor) is an admirable and understanding partner, but Urmi dislikes her constant refrain of "Harish says" and asks her to stop being submissive and assert herself. To Vanaa her submission is not mere surrendering but just doing what she prefers.

Urmi disagrees as she finds Harish ignoring Vanaa's desire to have a son. He strongly holds that husband should not leave all the work at home for the wife but help her. That is why when she finds Vanaa clearing bedroom cupboards and lofts, she says: "Why can't Harish help?" (BV 60)

That does not mean she does not wish to submit like Vanaa at times, but she fears the consequences: "I want to submit too. But I know that if I walk the way of submission once, I will walk that way forever." (BV 109)

Thus, what prevents submission in her case is the fear of losing independence, the desire to preserve her identity.

As we have seen earlier, Urmi married Kishore, her neighbour at Ranidurg as she fell in love with him. Their sexual relationship is passionate and satisfying. Yet she feels: "there is something in him I will never reach." (BV 143)

She has a fear too: "the fear of Kishore never returning home...the fear of his not wanting to come back to me...that's what I am most afraid of." (BV 110 – 111)

She never asks Kishore why and never dares tell him to change his job though she needs his physical presence. Often she wants to say "Each time you leave me, the parting is like death", but fails to utter the words to Kishore.

However, "marriage with a man who fits into life a few months in a year and flits out again" is not entirely free from troubles to a young woman. Such women with intense bodily hungers are not unlikely to develop extra-

marital relations. Urmi comes into contact with Dr. Bhaskar Jain who despite her marital status seeks intimacy with her. She is almost tempted to respond to his advances, but her love for Kishore being real, she resists the temptation finding it "so much easier, so much simpler, to just think of virtue and chastity and being a good wife." (BV 110)

And she proves herself a good wife. She manages everything in absence of her husband. She earns; she looks after her children and also her parents who have become dependent upon her in their old age. Not only her parents but even her friend Vanaa had doubts about the success of the marriage and they had warned her in advance. But she stands the test as well as she had done earlier after the death of her grandmother. Her achievement at home justifies the statement - "Urmi's so smart, so competent." (BV 90)

But her competence as a social activist surpasses her success at home. She meets Shaku tai, Kalpana's mother, a poor working class woman. Kalpana, a girl of tender age, has been brutally raped and lies in coma as a result of injuries both physical and mental. The police want to record it as a car accident and Shaku tai is willing to accept it in the name of family honour. But Urmi argues with her and convinces that a raped girl is not at fault and it is the rapist who deserves and must get punishment. Her intervention and Dr. Bhaskar's cooperation makes it possible to set the record straight.

But a new problem arises as Kalpana remains in the hospital for a long time. The hospital authorities want to shift her to a suburban hospital as there

are not enough beds. Then she publicizes the case with her friend Malcolm who was a classmate and is now working with the press. As a result there are demonstrations for Kalpana, uproar in the Assembly, the Government backtracks ordering an investigation into Kalpana's case and cancelling her transfer. She gets involved in the case despite the disapproval of her mother and sister – in – law.

Discovery of Mira's poems and diaries open a new chapter in her life. It makes her aware of the trauma of rape whether it is a marital rape or rape of an unmarried girl. Her involvement with the case of Kalpana seems to be related to a large extent to the revelations about Mira. While Priti wants to exploit Mira's story for commercial purpose and is rebuked by Urmi, the latter discusses with Vanaa and Akka and decides to translate Mira's poems in English. However, she is not going to publish the translation without taking Kishore in confidence as Mira was his mother.

Urmi differs from and surpasses heroines of previous three novels in self – confidence, independence of mind and strength of will.

While Indu, Sarita and Jaya are confined to their personal or family problems, Urmi goes far beyond and decides to fight another woman's battle, a woman who dwells in a slum. That is somewhat unusual in a society rigidly divided into classes as people rarely bother about people belonging to the lower sections of the society.

Shakuntala (or Shaku tai) is a poor working class woman. She works in the principal's office in a girl's school. She has three children (two daughters and a son) called Kalpana, Prakash and Sandhya. She has a loud voice but a soft heart. She meets a girl in the hospital who has come to attend her paralytic mother and volunteers to help the stranger. She loves her children and does all that is possible to keep them happy. She has bought a TV set for them and mirror, nail paint etc. for Kalpana. She conceded even the luxury of keeping a cat and feeding it with milk for the sake of her eldest daughter. Thus, she proves to be a loving mother.

Her married life, however, has not been happy. Unfortunately she is married to a man who loves to remain idle, who never tries to have a permanent job. The fellow failed to take her to Bombay where he lived even after six months of marriage, so she had to go to his place herself. The man shared a room with his cousin in the police chawl. The couple under the circumstances had to sleep in a common passage where people were often moving. Shaku tai could not think of sex in that awkward situation. She wanted to improve her condition by working and got a job at a grocer's shop. But her husband's lust would listen to no reasoning and she got pregnant. Thus Kalpana was born and then Prakash and Sandhya. Shaku tai worked hard and took several odd jobs to maintain the family. Her husband rewarded her for all that by leaving her and living with another wife.

Her bitter experiences have shattered her dream of wearing a mangalsutra made in gold. As she confesses herself:

"Then one day I thought - the man himself is so worthless, why should I bother to have this thing made in precious gold. That's been the greatest misfortune of my life, Urmila, marrying that man." (BV 179)

Now, paan and tea are the only pleasures left in her life.

Shaku tai is not educated. She is quite ignorant of the Marxist theory of state which includes the police in the instruments of class oppression and class domination. But she has discovered the truth from her experience. She tells Urmila that the police will not bother about finding out the culprit, but "just harass us". (BV 146)

That is borne out by Dr. Bhaskar Jain's odd encounter with the police officer who is reluctant to set the record straight and talks a lot about the morals of "the girls of that class". (BV 190)

Obviously, the state apparatus is biased against the lower class and least interested in truth. It is class that matters, not the truth.

Besides her bitter, almost instinctive realization lie all the misconceptions, prejudices and fears that the poor are generally subjected to. When Dr. Bhaskar Jain examines Kalpana and finds it a case of rape and not a car accident as recorded at first, she wants to hide the fact recoiling in fear:

".....don't tell anyone, I will never be able to hold up my head again. Who'll marry the girl, we are decent people." (BV 146)

She is worried about the prospects of the marriage of not only Kalpana, but also the other daughter Sandhya. She ignores in that worry the need to trace the rapist and get him punished.

Dr. Jain finds that intriguing as marriage has given hardly any pleasure to Shaku tai. So he comments: "Women are astonishing. I think it takes a hell of a lot of courage for a woman like her even to think of marriage." (BV 111)

Urmi with her better awareness of women's conditions and thoughts supplies the answer:

"women like Kalpana's mother do find something in marriage.

"Security. You're safe from other men." (BV 93,195)

Women of the poor sections are particularly vulnerable if they remain unmarried, they become easy targets for the rapists. It is not unusual in our society to blame the victim instead of the rapist and that is why helpless women like Shaku tai generally do not want to disclose any incident of rape. Most of the cases are, therefore, unreported and the guilty get away scot free. As the cases of rape are tough to handle, the police too are reluctant to register and pursue them. The act of rape is supposed to smear the name of the girl and her family. As Shaku tai puts it,

"There are always people waiting to throw stones at us, our own people first of all." (BV 93,111)

This deplorable attitude of the society dampens the morale of the victim and her relations. That is evident from Shaku tai's remark:

"Sometimes I think the only thing that can help Kalpana now is death." (BV 191)

Urmila has a hard time explaining to her that the fault lies with the rapist and not the victim, that the rapist must be traced and brought to book. Circumstances compel her to submit to the logic of Urmil and the doctor. As Kalpana has little chances of recovery and her treatment lingers on for a long time, the hospital authorities decide to transfer her to some suburban hospital on the ground of paucity of beds. It will be difficult for Shaku tai, a poor woman, to go there and see her daughter. At this stage, the reporter friend of Urmil comes into the picture and publicises the case. Initially Shaku tai's reaction is that of embarrassed one. They try to stay inside to the maximum extent possible and Prakash becomes difficult to deal with. However, the publicity given to the case leads to protest marches by women, questions and scenes in the Assembly which halt the transfer and result in a fresh enquiry. As most of the papers support the cause, she is impressed and concludes: "The whole world is my friend." (BV 111) Thus, she learns the lesson that hushing up leads to a blind alley while one has to fight in order to win.

Breathing in a society that blames women for the outrage committed by men, "she believes that women must fear." (BV 193) This fear leads her to think that young women must cover themselves well and avoid make-up. "And

if you paint and flaunt yourself, do you think they'll leave you alone?" (BV 192 – 193) That is how she argues blaming her daughter for the rape.

Like most of the poor, uneducated women she has got traditional ideas about marriage. So when Kalpana decides to marry she disapproves of it:

"I said, you can't, How could I let her? We don't even know the boy's caste, leave alone his family. How could we hold our heads up among our people?" (BV 194)

This strict adherence to tradition leads to tragic consequences.

Shaku tai is naïve and fails to understand her daughter. There is also a communication gap between the mother and daughter but for which the fatal tragedy in the novel might have been avoided. She fails to understand it when Kalpana refuses to wear the first sari given to her and forces her to wear it. She fails to make out when Kalpana tears up her photograph with her mother's sister Sulu and her husband Prabhakar. She sends Kalpana to her sister with the hope that she will live there happily as her sister was childless and loved Kalpana. Kalpana, however, runs away and goes to her father and refuses to go back despite scolding and beating. That too remains but a paradox to Shaku tai. She does not suspect that Prabhakar has set her eyes on her daughter. Then, she commits a blunder when she asks her sister to persuade her daughter not to marry the boy she wants to. Prabhakar, thereby, comes to know of Kalpana's resolve and forces himself on her. Kalpana as a result is injured physically and mentally. Thus Shaku tai's naiveté proves disastrous.

Shaku tai's sister Sulu is the other woman who belongs to the lower class. She is delicate but active. She never remains idle. She keeps her home neat and clean and all her vessels shining. Shaku tai still remembers how well she had arranged Sankranti haldi – kumkum for her once:

"She did it all so beautifully. She had embroidered a table cloth for the table, she arranged the haldi – kumkum things on it. She made little boxes of coloured paper to put the tilgul in, she got tiny mirrors and combs to give the women. They talked about it for days." (BV 129)

Sulu loves her sister deeply and she is always helpful to her. When Shaku tai went home after work, tired, hungry and thirsty, Sulu waited for her with a cup of tea and hot meal. She looked after her children - Kalpana, Prakash and Sandhya - when they were babies and Shakutai went to work. It would have been difficult for Shakutai to survive and manage, had she not stood by her all along.

It was Sulu who chose the names of her sister's children. Her affection and care for them is immense. Kalpana, however, remains the most favourite among them. She loves her as if she is her own child. As soon as she begins earning, she buys things for Kalpana - frocks, pins, ribbons etc. and Kalpana too becomes fond of her. Later she wants to keep Kalpana with her and "look after her schooling and everything else." Shaku tai accepts the proposal as god

– send as she thinks it will ensure a better life for her. Eventually the plan fails but her feelings for her niece cannot be doubted.

Sulu's married life, however, proves a disaster. Her husband is neither a drunkard nor a wife – beater nor a waster like her sister's husband. Still, her life becomes devoid of joy and she is always frightened. She feels insecure as she is childless. That provides adequate excuse to a husband to throw out his wife and take another. Social convention does not listen to reason. It does not care to find out if the childlessness is solely, invariably the fault of the woman. Again, it leaves no room for adoption, a course open for a couple who really love their spouse and do not seek an excuse for remarriage. Childlessness, however, is not the only misfortune that befalls Sulu. White patches appear on her face, her arms and her neck. Then, her husband Prabhakar stops touching her. That is what makes her feel extremely insecure. She fears her husband will throw her away sooner than later.

In that state of mind, she commits errors that prove fatal both for her and Kalpana. First of all, she does not confide into anyone, not even to her sister about the trouble she is facing. Then she hides the mischief of her husband and goes to the extent of conceding to his unjust demands. Her husband tries to molest Kalpana and that is the reason she leaves her house in three days. But she asks Kalpana not to tell that to her mother or anyone else. That is her desperate attempt to save her marriage without straining relations with her sister's family.

Emboldened with the timid response of his wife, Prabhakar demands Kalpana as the price of preventing the dissolution of marriage: "Get Kalpana, he kept telling her, and you can stay on here.." (BV 192 – 193) Sulu discusses the matter with her sister who accepts it as the best thing for Kalpana. But Kalpana dismisses the proposal despite Sulu's entreaties. Neither Sulu nor Shaku tai stand justified in the move but the worst thing she does is the blunder she commits in telling her husband that Kalpana has resolved to marry a boy of her choice. That hastens the rape of Kalpana and when the involvement of her husband is revealed in it, she commits suicide.

Sulu's plight represents the state of women belonging to the poor, illiterate sections of society. Men are seldom blamed for childlessness, though scientifically, they too may be responsible for it. White patches may appear on the body of a man too, but his wife dare not humiliate him for that. Without helplessness and hopeless sense of insecurity no woman can concede to the unjust demand of her husband to get a girl of tender age she treats as her daughter. Thus we find that while one section of women is getting educated and empowered, the other remains deprived and suffers.

A Matter of Time (1996) is a tale of three generations of women who face adversity in their lives and respond to their difficult situations in different ways. They have potentialities that do not attain fruition. They are victims of their circumstances that deprive them of peace and happiness. Their conjugal life ends in discord and despair. These are the things the three women –

Manorama, Kalyani and Sumi share in common. But their times, circumstances and temperaments vary and that is why they face the odds before them in different manner.

Manorama, tall and beautiful, was the eldest of the four daughters of a poor Brahmin. It was customary in those days as it is even now, for the parents to get their daughters married before puberty. So the parents or guardians had to seek grooms and arrange the marriage within the time limit. In case of Manorama they did not have to worry. A visitor from Bangalore “notices her confidence, self – assurance and intelligence more than her shabby clothes” (MT 44 – 45) and choose her for his son. Moreover, though she grew up just a month before the date of wedding and the groom’s father was informed about it, the marriage took place. Thus Manorama’s marriage was arranged and she herself and her parents could think of it as god send.

Manorama was lucky enough to have some education as her parents dared to send her to a school set up by a non – Brahmin woman where most of the students too were non – Brahmins. That was an unusually bold step as unlike later times, “schooling for a girl was something that could come in the way of her marriage prospects.” (MT 24)

Eventually it proved otherwise. Her schooling changed her into a better being that pleased Vidhal Rao’s father. She lives happily after marriage and feels proud of her husband’s position in society. As her schooling had

enlightened her, she got involved in a number of public activities, including the institution of The Yamunabai Pawar School for girls. Her husband supported her in all those activities.

There were, however, factors that eroded the bliss of married life. She was disappointed as she had only a daughter after several miscarriages. It was clear she would have no more children. Absence of a male child was a sufficient pretext in those days for a husband to remarry. So, she felt insecure: a son would have been “the main crutch while the girl would get married and become part of another family.” (MT 191) That was the beginning of her troubles.

Instead of facing the reality boldly, she found a scapegoat in her daughter and treated her rather unkindly. The girl was good at Mathematics and aspired to become an engineer but Manorama took her out of school and gave her in marriage with her youngest brother Sripati hastily. Then, as Kalyani bore a son only once and that too an idiot, Manorama became even more disappointed. But that was the end of the story. Kalyani was deserted by her husband and returned to her parental home. A sane mother should have consoled her daughter under the circumstances and stood by her. Manorama was not sensible enough to do that. That created a rift between Manorama and her husband, Vidhal Rao and hastened the death of the latter. That Kalyani was deserted did not necessarily mean they must withdraw from public activities.

Had they not withdrawn, they could have proved useful to the society and benefitted themselves by gaining peace of mind and strength to overcome all the odds in life. But Manorama did not choose that course and pushed her husband too toward disaster.

Manorama's daughter Kalyani is victimized first by her mother and then by her husband but acts more sensibly and kindly than her mother despite her ill – luck. Her mother behaves rather callously by ending her schooling at 15. Then, within a year Kalyani is married to a man she does not love and who too does not love her. Despite that, she stands by both her parents at the critical moments. First she consoles her father when he collapses into a broken, suffering human being, wipes his tears and when he is about to die she removes him from the bed and places him on the floor to let him die peacefully. Then, she serves her mother too patiently during her last days despite her tyranny, suspicion and fear as Manorama will not allow anybody else to look after her.

Kalyani's marriage is a loveless, arranged marriage – a marriage of convenience. She marries Sripati as she has no option and Sripati marries her as he cannot disobey her eldest sister who has looked after him and enabled him to be one a lawyer. Such marriages sanctioned by custom disregard the feelings of the persons who are made partners and companions for life. However, such marriages are quite common and couples do their best to make them successful. But the marriage in case of Kalyani fails.

Kalyani bore only one son, Madhav, who grew well physically but remained retarded mentally. She was going home to Bangalore for the holidays. Her husband went to check reservations at V.T. leaving her with the children. Unfortunately, Madhav, then four, suddenly disappeared from the platform. When Sripati returned and did not find his son, he left his wife and daughter with the luggage on the platform and went about the city searching like a mad man. Anil's grandfather brought them to his house and later Kalyani went to her parental house. Sripati remained missing for two months. Ever since then, Sripati has not spoken to her. That is a punishment she does not deserve.

It is unjust as she was not negligent. As a young and inexperienced mother, it was not easy for her to manage two children alone. More so because the boy was not normal mentally but physically well – grown. It was difficult to control him. Somehow, he slipped unnoticed and as a mother she too felt the loss.

Kalyani proves better than her mother by allowing her daughter to marry the man of her choice. When she learns about the desertion of Sumi by her husband, she cries out, “no, my god, not again.” (MT 200) That is, she does not want a repetition of what happened to her, in case of her daughter. She goes to Gopal and argues with him, trying to convince him to change his decision.

She goes to the extent of saying that

“how could she have known what being a good wife means when she never saw her mother being one? Taught her nothing. It's all my fault, Gopal forgive me and don't punish her for it.” (MT 20)

Similarly, she shows her concern and anxiety for her daughter when Sumi who is learning scooter gathers speed and goes out of the gate.

Sumi, the daughter of Kalyani, is another female character in the novel that deserves our attention. She was quite advanced in her approach to sex in theory and practice. Born in a society that inhibits sex, she was not allowed boy – friends by her father. Once he saw her with a boy and said, "Remember my dignity." (MT 12) But then he let in Gopal as a tenant and Sumi found the man of her choice. True, Gopal was enchanted by Sumi. Her sight filled him with the same astonishment and delight that the idol of Parvati in the temple of Dilwara had. One afternoon Gopal is awakened by the voices of Sumi and her friend and watching them from his room, he felt like Dushyanta watching Shakuntala and her two friends. Despite that it was not Gopal but Sumi who became the initiator. She broke out of her father's authority at eighteen, went to Gopal's room at night. Gopal sat out in the veranda all the while but accepted her in the morning. That shows her confidence and boldness as a contrast to the diffidence and hesitation of Gopal.

This confidence and boldness issue from her sane approach to sex. Quite contrary to the tradition, she holds that woman need not be ashamed of their sexuality which is quite normal. That is what enables her to interpret popular tales in a heterodox way. She interprets the fairy – tale about ‘The Princess and the Gardener's Son’ as a tale of princess who had fallen in love with the gardener's son and tricked her father with a queer condition to get him. Similarly, to her Surpanakha was “neither ugly nor hideous, but a woman charged with sexuality, not frightened of displaying it.” (MT 21) Female sexuality is reality that woman cannot and should not disown and men too ought to recognize it.

There are several traits in her personality that set her apart from others. She is a keen observer of the world around her and a good learner from experiences. Formerly, life seemed "a magician's bag, full of odds and ends" to her. Later she comes to concur with Gopal: "Destiny in just us and therefore inescapable, because we cannot escape ourselves. Certain actions are inevitable because we are what we are." (MT 165)

Her conception of destiny is thus different from that of her mother. It does not make her a fatalist. While her mother invokes Ganapati to protect her family, she remarks: "He doesn't do such a good job of looking after the women in the family, does he?" (MT 59)

So, he believes that women have to look after themselves instead of depending on some deity or some male. The philosopher in Sumi knows the inevitability of change and brings home the point to her daughter Charu in the following manner:

"You silly girl, you're dying to finish pre – university and get into medical college. Isn't that change? But that will be my doing. I don't want things to change because of what other people do.

It's never possible to avoid that" (MT 60)

Her marriage with Gopal is based on an understanding. At the time they decided to marry, Gopal had said that at any time if either of them

"wanted to be free, the other would let go". They were "not going to be tied together." (MT 123)

He was only twenty – six and she only eighteen at that time. Yet the marriage lasted for over twenty – three years and she found it, unlike her mother's, satisfactory.

"Our life was complete", she tells Gopal reflecting on it. (MT 123)

As in marriage, so within the family Sumi like Gopal, practises democracy. Unlike her father, she does not exercise her despot rule over her

daughters. However, she does not claim any credit for it. She gives all the credit to her husband. She contends it was her laziness, her desire to avoid unpleasantness that made her follow Gopal in that respect. That is how she explains her position to Devaki but in the light of her experiences of early life at home, she seems to have chosen that course of her own will.

Her married life lasts over two decades and then Gopal decides to walk out and tells her about it. She does not protest as agreed before marriage. The desertion unburdens Gopal of his responsibilities as a husband and father, but brings in a lot of problems for Sumi. First, she has to face the reactions of not only of the society at large but also of her near and dear ones. Secondly, she has to maintain the house hold properly. Thirdly, she has to look after her daughters, to educate and guide them alone. These are no mean challenges and she accepts them courageously rising up to the occasion.

The desertion does not throw her off balance. She remains calm and goes on with her routine work. Her stoicism seems enigmatic to her near and dear ones. They find it difficult that they have parted without any quarrels, without any apparent reasons. They have learnt from their experience that such things happen very often before married couples separate and therefore it is quite inconceivable on their part to think that separation with discontent and resentment is ever possible. But it is a fact that she does not ask Gopal to

explain his decision at the time he declares it not even later. Thus she remains true to her agreement with Gopal till the end.

Reactions of her three daughters differ. Seema, the youngest of the three finds the development very painful and bursts into tears while telling about it to her grandmother. But she is not volatile. Charu perceives it as the hassles of her parents and bothers about nothing but her career. She is determined to complete her studies at medical college. Quite unexpectedly, Anu the eldest takes it quite hard. She wants her family intact with her father back. She argues with her mother and father and even contemplates about taking legal measures against her father. Sumi is aware of the futility of her pursuit but she deems it better to let her learn it herself.

Sumi is always open and above board. She has the courage to accept and face the reality and does not like to hide it.

Soon after Gopal's desertion, she disapproves of Ramesh's euphemism and says:

"say it Ramesh, say he's missing, say he's walked out on his wife and children. It's got to come out some time, how long are we going to hide it from the world? And do you think people don't know?"

(MT 232 – 233)

Even when Rohit falls in love with her daughter Anu, she does not bother about it. She believes that marriage like other human relationships should not be based on falsehood and pretensions.

Gopal's desertion leaves no option before the family but to leave their rented house due to financial reasons. Sumi moves with her daughters to her personal house. She takes the decision at first as a temporary measure. She thinks: "I don't want my daughters love with a hand clasped over their mouths like Premi and I had to do." (MT 119 – 120) She does not want to place her daughters in a house where her parents are living in a queer relationship. Eventually, however, she realizes the futility of seeking another house while the big house has ample room for the family. Even her father "Sripati is not the same to his granddaughters as he was to his own daughters." (MT 225) She observes the change and gives up her intention to leave it. That shows her ability to comprehend her situation and make necessary adjustments to it.

As the novelist puts it:

"It was – the economics of the situation that had made the decision for her". (MT 27)

Despite her problems and despite the willingness of her wealthy relations to help her, she does not like to become a parasite.

As she puts it:

"There's Ramesh ready to give me money, and Devi and Premi, of course. And now you are asking me if I need any money. It's so easy for me to take it from all of you, to go on living here free, sponging on you." (MT 218 – 219)

So she rejects all the offers of money, including that of her father and seeks a job in order to become independent. Again she rejects the proposal of Ramesh which would have made it possible for her to have a home of her own. Thus we find she has got dignity and self – respect which do not wane even in her adversity. She stays with her parents only on the condition that they accept her help in the household and gets a temporary job in a school to support her family.

Her progressive attitude is evident from the fact that she feels glad about Anu's participation in a demonstration for women's cause. Also, she does not feel uneasy about the growing intimacy of her two daughters Anu and Charu with two young men, namely Rohit and Hrishi. She allows it to develop as a normal human relationship. Strangely enough, it is Anu who feels uneasy when Kumar calls Sumi thrice in connection with her school play as if Kumar was going to become her stepfather.

The new situation also brings forth Sumi's hidden literary talent. She hears one of the teachers in her school speak of wanting a play for the inter – school play competition and remembers the story of the princess who married a gardener's son. Then, she writes the play 'The Gardener's Son' in two nights. It is a success on the stage and brings praise and recognition to Sumi.

The play impresses Lalita who recognizes her even after a year. It also helps her in getting a teacher's job in a residential school in Devagiri despite her age and inexperience. She is about to join the school when an accident cuts short her life. Her departure from the scene leaves a message not only to her daughters but to many other women fallen in similar circumstances to think rationally and act boldly never losing their nerves.

Small Remedies (2001) has several women characters remarkable for their traits – positive or negative ones. There is Lata who works in a bank. She loves her husband Hari and does her best to make Madhu comfortable. Gradually she becomes free enough with Madhu to talk about her love affairs, her worries and her problems too. Her in – laws are rich but she does not like to depend on them. Rather, she feels awkward in their presence as she is not accustomed to the life style of the extremely rich. She does not feel that the responsibility of being the wage earner of the family is solely with the husband. That line of thinking places her apart from the traditional stereotype. On the other hand, we find characters like Paula and Munni too. Paula dislikes her

father's second wife Leela, showers abuses (whore etc.) on her and makes life hell for the orphaned girl Madhu and compels her to leave for hostel even before the college opens. Then, there is Munni who loves light music and movies but rejects classical music. Early in her life she finds pleasure in scandals and goes to the extent of asking Madhu to steal money from her father's drawer. In search of leading the life of a traditional Hindu wife of a respectable family, she blanks out her parents from her life and ends as Shailaja Joshi. She succeeds in her endeavour by sacrificing truth at the altar of respectability. Lata's mother is the typical representative of the superstitious woman in the society while Leela's mother who summons her daughter after about three decades simply to confide the secret of her deceased husband's illicit relationship with a widow – a relationship that gave birth to a son – reveals a queer aspect of the human nature.

Savitribai is the control figure of the novel never the less. Born in a wealthy Brahmin family, she was the first child of her parents. She learnt music from her mother in childhood. As her mother sang devotional songs, she recited them. Thus grew her passion for music.

Her lessons began in

"a small unused room on the first floor of the house, a room that looked down on the back courtyard." The room was "musty smelling" but there she entered a new world for removed from the

world of – a daughter – in – law of the house." A month or two later, a tabla – player was introduced into the classes. (SR 148 – 149, 200)

Her aspiration to become a great musician, however, could not be realised within the walls of her marital home. So she leaves it at last with the tabla – player, Ghulam Saab. In the meantime they have become parents of a girl, Munni. Her ambitions do not pay heed to that daughter at the time she leaves, though later the daughter joins the two at Neemgaon.

Kashinath Buwa of the Gwalior gharana was a well known singer at that time. So she decided to become her disciple but it was not easy. He had settled down in the vicinity of Bhavani temple in Bhavanipur in the last years of his life. Students from all parts of India came to learn music from him. The man stayed in the Guruji's establishment in the temple but she had to live in Bhavanipur town in a house which had just two rooms with an outside toilet shared by others. There was neither electricity nor running water. She had to travel by the local shuttle train and walk two miles through the fields to reach her guru's establishment.

That, however, did not happen all of a sudden. She heard Kashinath Buwa for the first time in Pune during a Ganapati festival and made up her mind to learn music from him. Later after a year she went to Bombay for a family function and she went to meet him but he turned down her request.

Then after a year or two she went to live in Bombay with Ghulam Saab. There she started music lessons with Ghulam who was not only a good tabla – player but a good musician too. But that was only a stopgap arrangement. Again she approached Kashinath Buwa with the same request and he dismissed that too. Then she began to visit him almost every day with the same request not thwarted by his refusal and continued her attempts to persuade him. However, he persisted in refusing as he thought music was not a profession meant for a married respectable woman. If she wanted to take up music as a hobby, there were others to teach her. He was a traditional man and did not want to encourage her to step out of her traditional role.

She tried to approach him through various people with the same result. Then he fell ill and left Bombay for his home town Bhavanipur. After recovery she too followed. One evening she went to his house and told him she would not leave Bhavanipur until he took her as a student. At last he conceded but laid down some conditions. She was to live in Bhavanipur town, nearly ten miles from the temple and do come thrice a week in the afternoons. As a married Brahmin woman she could not live in his house with the male students, hence such conditions. Besides, she was to learn music afresh and forget what she had learnt earlier.

The official ganda – tying ceremony was held on Dasara day. Savitribai sold her gold bangles to pay her guruji on the occasion. But she

needed more for maintaining a household in the town and living there. Ghulam Saab came to her rescue at that time.

"He worked as an accompanist, he worked for a while in a professional drama troupe, he worked with a music director for films, he gave music lessons." (SR 180 – 181)

Thus Ghulam Saab played a no mean role in fulfilling her aspirations.

After the death of her Guru ji, she left Bhavanipur and went to Bombay. She passed through a difficult time there and had to sell all her jewellery for survival. Worst of all she had an ailment that affected her voice and she could not sing for about a year. Luckily she met a doctor (Chandru's father) who cured her. She won recognition and a lot of success in her profession after her recovery.

From Bombay, she moved to Neemgaon where she found several admirers and patronisers who advanced her career. They included the Station Director of Neemgaon Radio Station. Ghulam Saab contributed a lot during that period too. "He met people on her behalf, he arranged her programmes, he made the contracts for her." (SR 231 – 232)

She would never have been able to manage that part of her professional life without him, as Hasina puts it. It was during her stay at Neemgaon that her daughter stayed with her, though she did not have a good

opinion of them. Ghulam Saab, a kind soft spoken man was nothing but a villain to her. At last Munni left her to marry and become Shailaja Joshi and Ghulam Saab too returned to her family in old age. Then, like her guru, she too went to Bhavanipur to spend the remaining days of her life. Madhu, her biographer who had seen her at Neemgaon, went there to interview her and collect materials for her biography.

Savitribai had survived her first stroke before Madhu came to her house in Bhavanipur. Though she hated rules and conventions of orthodoxy formerly, she had become orthodox Brahmin after the stroke and would not accept food from Hasina, the grand – daughter, her student for fifteen years and a care – taker of her household for two years. Sometime after Madhu's arrival the second stroke took place. Savitri bai survived but lost her speech though she could recognise people. Madhu and Hasina were the only persons to attend her when she was admitted to the hospital.

That was virtually the end of her story as nothing mattered in life to her but music. She had lost her ability to sing after the first stroke and that was a great catastrophe for her, as she puts it to Madhu:

"The only thing that mattered to me, the only thing that mattered about me, was my music. And that's over for me now. ----- I never though this would happen to me, I thought I would go on until I died. And then it was over" (SR 233)

The second stroke left her speechless, unable to even talk about music.

As Madhu puts it, she was

"the last of the musicians of the great classical style, one of a handful of purists, indeed of all musicians." She "made no concessions to change, to innovation, to the demands of contemporary audiences" and considered "innovations to be cheap gimmicks." (SR 46)

Her single – minded pursuit of music, her determination to achieve the goal and her success in reaching her goal are really remarkable and distinguish her among her contemporaries. She passed through a lot of difficulties and social barriers to reach the height and won a position for her in a sphere forbidden for married women of respectable families. She had to break the tradition to accomplish it.

That is but one aspect of her life but not the whole of it. There is another aspect of her life which does not present her in favourable light. She acted rebel in early life but proved a coward and a hypocrite in her later life. She put on her mangalsutra which she had discarded earlier and turned orthodox refusing to take food from Hasina. Then she blanked out her daughter out of her biography. Similarly, she did not acknowledge the debt of Ghulam Ahmad . Often we wonder whether she was devoid of all feelings for her lover,

daughter and disciples like Hasina. Though it is highly uncharitable to suggest it, we are left with the impression that all the human relations were simply a means to further her ends and nothing else to her. If she outshines many as a musician, she appears wanting a lot as a human being. That explains the strange phenomenon that despite all her name and fame, she finds only two persons – Hasina and Madhu around her in her most critical hours.

Leela presents a happy contrast to Savitribai. While Savitribai was obsessed with music and disregarded everything else, Leela who took to politics seriously, remained sincere and truthful with her relations. She did nothing that she felt ashamed of or had to hide. Though she did win the recognition she deserved, her benign presence was felt and appreciated by all who came into contact or came to know her.

She was not lucky enough to get higher education but she started her career as a teacher. Then she organised factory workers. She played a role during the Quit India Movement. She had no faith in the Gandhian methods and preferred direct action against the foreign rule. She joined the Communist party out of her conviction but she was disillusioned to find people around her who were unconcerned with ideology. Though she was elected a corporator, she could not do anything worthwhile under the system as she had disagreements with the party on Tibet and Sino – Indian war ("The Chinese Invasion" as the novelist puts it) and she resigned from the CP to join the Socialist group.

Then she took part in the anti – price rise campaign. Saddened by her husband's death, she was out of her spirit for a while but regained it during the Railway strike. She refused to go underground during the emergency, was arrested and spent a year in prison. Unlike many who led the workers and lived luxurious lives, she spent most of her days in Maruti Chawl with the working class people and left it only when the land mafia left no option for her. One may or may not endorse her views, particularly on Tibet and China, but one must admit that she practised what she preached, that she was neither a hypocrite nor an opportunist.

Her personal life is no less remarkable. She was born in a Brahmin family. The family was proud of their caste and also of the fact that they were inamdars. She was one of the six sisters – all named after rivers. Her real name was Sindhu. She and her sister Kaveri were the rebels who disowned caste and rejected the false pride of the Inamdars. Kaveri married a non – Brahmin and she too married a Christian after the death of her first husband.

Leela was married at 15 by her grand – mother who thought it was a punishment. She began her married life at Maruti Chawl with her husband Vasant. Fortunately, both her husband and her mother – in – law were good and she got the opportunity to attend school and pass Metric. Then Vasant died of TB and her father came to take her back to her natal home. She could have gone there and spent the life of a widow in as much comfort as tradition

allowed. But she preferred to stay with her husband's family. She became self-supporting by taking up a teacher's job, helped her mother – in – law and got her two brothers – in – law educated.

Her concern for the health of the workers led to her meeting with Joe – a doctor and they fell in love. It was a strange love as Joe's Marathi was terrible and Leela's English almost non – existent. Yet communication between them was perfect. Paula, Joe's daughter from his first marriage, hated Leela and opposed the marriage. So she delayed her re – marriage, though Vasant's family had no objections to it. Even after marrying Joe, she lived on her own and after his death, she returned to Maruti Chawl very soon. As long as she lived with Joe and his children, she did her best to adjust and endure so that Joe was not perturbed. With the sole exception of Paula, everybody in Joe's family was satisfied, nay, pleased with her. Thus her second marriage was based on love. She did not expect monetary gain, comfort or riches from the marriage even though Joe was a doctor and as such, a rich man. Instead she had to remain patient and do a lot to keep peace and make everybody happy there which was a no mean task.

Leela hated idleness. That is evident from her comment on Bimal Roy's movie Devdas; "Now I know why that poor man drank so much. He had nothing to do, he didn't have any work at all." (SR 254 – 255) She wore 'ayah saris' and lived among the working class until she had to leave Maruti Chawl.

She died in Dadar in a small place which had but a room, kitchen and balcony. She suffered a lot during her last days as she was suffering from Cancer but refused further tests after undergoing surgery for breast cancer. She had friends and relations to stand by and three of them Sunanda, Shanta and Madhu were particular about attending her. She died of cancer at last.

Herself a rebel, she invited her sister Kaveri to stay with her husband at her Maruti Chawl when Kaveri left her natal family to marry a non – Brahmin. They stayed there for some time. Surely, Kaveri's husband was impressed with Leela. That is why he chose not his brother but Leela to look after his daughter after his death. The choice aggrieved his brother but he could not help as he had put it in black and white to avoid problem. Thus she got guardianship of Madhu after the death of her parents. That shows the faith Madhu's father had in Leela's sense of responsibility. The faith was not misplaced. Leela's love and care, her protective personae stood in good stead to Madhu. When Madhu passed a letter to Leela in prison during the Emergency, she told her :

" Don't do this again. Tell them I don't want you involved." (SR 191)

That shows how seriously she took the responsibility given to her. Thus we find a healthy balance between her private and public life, one does not affect the other or jeopardise it. She is great in her public life as well as in

her personal life. No wonder Hari would like Madhu to write a biography of Leela, instead of Savitribai.

Moving On (2004) is a novel full of numerous cases of unconventional marriages. Manjari's grandfather first married a Harijan woman and then a woman who had Mangal in an inauspicious place in her horoscope. Gayatri his daughter married a man of her own choice. His son, Badri Narayan married a non – Brahmin Marathi girl. Manjari married a Sindhi, while Raja's wife Rukku was Tamil. Such marriages seem astounding to us but for the fact that the novelist born in a Kannad Brahmin family is herself married to a non – Brahmin Marathi speaking doctor. Multiplicity of such marriages when initiated by the women in particular shows the extent to which they are asserting their right to choose.

Moving On has a number of women characters that arrest our attention. Gayatri who sacrificed her promising career for the sake of love, who had a clarity of vision and read enormously, a woman who had no children but proved a pillar to her brother's and brother – in – law's family, a source of light to them is one of them. Then we find Vasundhara (or Vasa for short) who was a writer of romanticized marriage stories published in popular Marathi magazines.

"Living among woman who had to be aggressive and strong to survive the endless drudgery and continuous lechery, she wrote of

silent sacrificing women An independent woman who hated being questioned, she wrote of woman who found happiness in submission, not only to their husbands, but to their families as well.” (MO 257)

Even the youngest of them, Sachi is a smart girl who finds no difficulty in communicating with people, who sleeps well in a running train and is confident enough to decide not to go to college but choose the career of film making. Most remarkable about her is the absence of greed and her sense of justice. She questions the propriety of her grandfather's will who bequeathed his house to her alone and wants to sell it to buy a flat jointly in the names of Anand, herself and Manjari in order to set it right. But, Manjari out shines all of them.

Manjari, the daughter of Badri Narayan and Vasundhara is far from an ordinary girl if we take note of her parentage. Her father was a doctor who taught anatomy to medical students while her mother was a Marathi story writer. They belonged to different linguistic groups and castes. Badri Narayan was able to overcome the barriers of language and caste after he fell in love with Vasundhara during her visit to hospital where she had come to see her injured brother Laxman.

Manjari decides to become a doctor but soon strays away disappointing her parents. To her father giving up studies is something like

"giving up your life", "like committed suicide." (MO 222, 227) That is why he disapproves of her decision. Her mother too objects to it and asks her to complete her studies. But she does not like to wait for four years to graduate and one year more for internship. She has fallen in love with a Sindhi, Shyam, a cinematographer and wants to marry him soon. To her mother it is only physical: "your body is confusing you", she declares. (MO 283) But she has made up her mind and announces her resolve by kissing Shyam twice on his lips before her mother.

Manjari's married life begins at eighteen in a single room she occupies with her husband. Though Shyam lives in the same house with his family, he has a separate existence and pays rent to them for his room. Though Manjari cannot make out what they speak, it is obvious to her they are bickering all the time. Thus they present a striking contrast to her natal family. Shyam's brother, not a very successful lawyer, is the only exception who looks after his unpleasant father and has given his difficult sister a home. Even the "unpleasant father" deserves readers' pity when we learn that his mother, a Muslim who had married a Hindu was killed by her own people during the partition leaving him as the sole bread winner for three younger siblings. Her ugly room, all the harsh voices and even the urine stinking bath room become bearable to her under the spell of love.

Though she has married much against the wishes of her parents, soon reconciliation takes place. She is invited to her natal home for the ritual of Mangal Gauri and spends a few days there. When she returns, she learns that Shyam's boss Feroz had offered him Ocean Vista for six months. That is the seaside house where Shyam and Manjari have spent their week long honeymoon before going to their tiny room. So they move to live there and thereafter she does not meet anyone of Shyam's family again with the single exception of Shyam's brother who comes to see her twice after Shyam's death.

Manjari's married life is cut short when she is twenty one as Shyam dies of drowning in the sea. But a lot of mishaps occur before that. Manjari's sister Malu becomes pregnant and Shyam is found to be the man responsible for her pregnancy. Malu is taken to a suburban flat, delivers a daughter and dies of post – natal complication after a few days. Her death is supposed to be a case of meningitis. Manjari's mother expects her to take the baby with her and go to Shyam. But that plan does not materialise as Manjari has lost contact with Shyam. Gayatri, her father's sister takes charge of the baby in the meantime. After Shyam's death, however, she makes up her mind and promises her mother (who is diabetic and nearing her death) to adopt the baby as her own daughter. Thus, she becomes the mother of two children Anand and Sachi, instead of the one (Anand) alone.

She proves a caring mother to both Anand and Sachi. She does her best to get them educated well and keeps them in good residential schools. She is not dominating or meddling to them. Instead of taking all the decisions for them, she prefers to listen to them. That is particularly true about Sachi. The house in which she is living, is bequeathed to Sachi by her father Badri Narayan and she respects her decision to sell it even though she does not think it expedient. She does not object to it when Sachi chooses a career of film making after completing her twelfth class exams. She is wise enough to realize that Sachi needs a family after observing her with BK and Raja. She is satisfied to note that she has found one.

Life of a woman who owns a house and is living alone in a city is hardly safe in Indian cities nowadays. There are real estate dealers, promoters and land mafias to make life hell for them. And that is what happens to Manjari after the death of her husband. There are threatening phone calls ("you're a woman, don't forget that") and break-ins, but she does not submit. She deems it her sacred duty to keep the house for Sachi, who is the sole authority to dispose it. She has to serve as a trustee and she does that well.

Raja, the son of BK, aware of the threats she is receiving from the land mafia, wants to play the role of a protective male in her life. She buys her own car and learns driving and refuses to depend on a driver. Raja who has lost her spouse like her wants to marry her and his son Pavan as well as Anand

and Sachi like the idea, but she rejects the idea as she feels she has gone too far. No considerations – physical, financial or emotional – prove enough to persuade her to remarry.

That is not to gain say her sexuality. A widow since barely twenty one and now at forty one, it proves difficult for her to control her sexuality. She cannot resist the relentless demands of her body. She discovers a way to gratify it by sleeping with her tenant on her own terms, not his: "Only the body, his body, only my body, and my starved body. No thoughts, no feelings, only sensation." (MO 227) The affair is eventually revealed to Raja whose proposal Manjari has turned down.

He rebukes her sharply:

"I never thought you could sink so low. With a chap like that. In reply, she tells him about what respectable men have done. A friend's husband tried to induce her to become her mistress secretly. An employer about her father's age slobbered all over her and then fixed her finding fault with her character. A man could have raped her in own house but for her resistance. Then she goes on: "I gave up wearing Saris because I didn't want to look womanly, I cut my hair short like a man's, I wore my most forbidding expression. But it was of no use." (MO 317 – 323)

So it is useless to raise the question of respectability, it is the woman's right to choose.

Thus, she believes that biological need cannot be accepted as a pretext or excuse for subordination of the woman. She upholds a woman's right to sexual freedom. Female sexuality like the male one is a biological fact and woman need not be ashamed of it and deny or hide it. She does not deny the institution of marriage as such but she holds that it ought not to be based on considerations of expediency like social security or making two establishments one. She does not love Raja, nor is she willing to be dominated or dictated by him. Moreover, growing up together, she is too familiar with the curves of his body to feel erotically aroused by him. That is why she has rejected Raja's proposal and she will not permit him to exploit her affair with the tenant to compel her to change the decision.

Sachi does not like her frequent change of jobs and places and Raja calls her a rolling stone. Frequent change of place deprives children of the opportunity to be friends with boys and girls of their age. Indeed, she has changed them again and again. She has served as an ayah in a school, sales girl, typist, P.T. Teacher, nurse, etc. Roshan, a Parsi woman senior to her by thirty years provided her accommodation and gave her a job. So she served as a school principal's secretary for some time and found an opportunity to graduate. So she left that job only after Roshan's death. Even later she does not remain

idle. She takes yoga classes she plans to become a professional driver and again she applies for the post of a teacher in a residential school. She needs jobs as she does not want to become a burden on her parents or relations. As for the frequent change of jobs, it becomes inevitable due to uncompromising nature of Manjari and with it comes the change of place. Her reply to Raja quoted above suggests that frequent changes of jobs are partly explained by the behaviour of male employers or colleagues too who look upon women merely as sex objects.

To conclude, we may well quote Chanchala K. Naik who sums up her character as follows: "An affectionate daughter, a loving sister, a caring mother, and a good friend she is hardly imposing or demanding, and is not dependent on anyone. She is not over protective of her children and allows them their own space. Her engagements with life adopts a middle path -- be yourself and allow others to be; live on your own terms and let other live on their own." (Naik 2005: 227)

In the later novels of Shashi Deshpande, most of the lead women characters are well aware of their subjugated status in this androcentric society. The journey in search of individual identity other than that of wife, mother and daughter are portrayed in these novels. Deshpande plays the role of a social reformer also when she tries to project the ever growing consciousness of women of the society especially in the field of their sexist experiences. For

example Urmila and Vanaa in *The Binding Vine* share each other's suffering and come to solve other's emotional crisis.

The later novels try to introduce the idea of female bonding with a woman lending a helping hand to another woman who is not of her stature, who is less fortunate. The rigid lines dividing the society into classes somewhat get blurred. This change in condition of women probably refers to a marked shift in the societal attitude. The society which once saw woman only as house wives has gradually changed its notion and started to look up to them not only as home makers but also as working professionals. This change in outlook perhaps marks social progress, if it may be called so.

Thus Shashi Deshpande's novels reveal a lot of progress so far as the middle class women of India are concerned. Once it was a disqualification for women to attend schools. Then it became necessary to educate girls as grooms wanted graduate brides and even guardians of orthodox families like Akka had to send their girls to schools and colleges. That opened the world for them. Now we find they are learning several languages and becoming writers, journalists, lawyers, doctors and lecturers. They are also taking part in politics, trade union activity and social work. Even the professions once deemed exclusively fit for men are now open to them as it is possible for them now to enter into the professions like that of a musician or film – maker. Enlightenment is ridding them of prejudices and superstitions, even though they

have not disappeared altogether. Education and financial independence is enabling them to protest and choose, to decide for themselves. It is possible now to marry the man they love disregarding caste, ethnicity or religion and several women in the novels have married the same way. Most remarkable of all is the attitude to sex which has changed radically over time. Formerly women were ashamed of their sexuality and would not admit it as they were expected to be passive by the norms of the patriarchal society. Now they have sexual freedom too. That is, they want sex relations based on equality, devoid of coercion and domination. Deshpande preaches ambivalence between tradition and modernity to address the issues related to the problems of contemporary women. Tradition cannot be negated because of its inherent Indian values and modernity is essential for assertion of individuality and establishment of women identity.

However, the picture is not that rosy in case of the poor and uneducated. Shaku Tai in the *Binding Vine* and Mini in the *Roots and Shadows* are instances to the point. And even the home is often disturbed by the sexist attitudes of their husbands as is evident from the experiences of Sarita in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and Jaya in *That Long Silence*. However the novelist hopes some solutions to such problems can be and ought to be found within the institution of family – an institution she deems timeless and universal. It is essential to assert one's individual identity and gain freedom in social sphere.

Deshpande seems to be saying that it is the women themselves who have to exert and come out of the mire of patriarchal oppression to emerge as individuals and human beings in their own right.

CHAPTER VII

MAPPING THE GENERATION GAP IN MODERN INDIAN SOCIETY

Shashi Deshpande's novels present a wide range of types both in respect of parents and children and their relationship varies accordingly. The parent – child relationship and their complex aspect is an important issue of concern as she mentions in her revealing interview to Gita Vishwanathan in 2003:

“But marriage is important for me and so is the family, not just marriage. But besides marriage, the parent – child relationship is also important. These are the two relationships one is generally concerned with.” (2005:224)

Filial relationship is characterized by generation gap – the difference between ‘then’ and ‘now’. This ‘then’ is represented by parents who are taken to be authoritative and dominating, always trying to uphold social norms and customs through their assertiveness. Naturally, they are presumed to be the epitome of traditionality. Children, on the other hand, represent the ‘then’. They are symbolic of modernity because of their risk taking nature, freedom loving attitude and open mindedness. Thus, being at the opposite ends of the pole because of different mindsets leads to generation gap which is often a cause of disharmony within the family.

In the words of Jasbir Jain

“Childhood experiences and memories go a long way towards moulding life attitude and personal relationships. A feeling of rejection, a traumatic memory, tension in the household, sexual discrimination, extra – marital interest on the part of a parent – all these influence future relationships.” (Jain 2003:121)

Anant in *Roots and Shadows* (1992) has four children. He is a failed pleader. Most of the land he depended on formerly is gone and to cultivate what remains he has to depend upon others with the result that the cultivation is no longer profitable. He requires financial help from his brothers very often. Despite that, he does not seem much concerned about Akka’s money. He is conscious of his weaknesses which have compromised his position in relation to his sons. His daughter Padmini (Mini) is neither brilliant nor beautiful but docile and a realist, rather fatalist. Though the groom chosen for her by her grand – aunt is neither intelligent, nor educated nor handsome, she does not object to her marriage. She submits gracefully to the situation as she has no option and also because she does not want to trouble her parents. She is so particular about the comfort of her father that she does not fail to serve him hot water for his bath even on the day before her wedding.

Anant’s sons present a contrast to Mini. Hemant, the eldest is married and has two sons. As he failed his first year in college, Akka (the virtual head

of the family) refused to give him more than one chance again. So he remains undergraduate and employed as a clerk. Though his job is quite suitable to his abilities, he is dissatisfied and grumbling. Even when Indu admires his handwriting, he brings in the issue of his job as if she were taunting him.

“I am both the dhobi’s donkey and the scapegoat here.” (RS 53) he says but the fact is that he blames others for his failure and shortcoming. Akka and Anant are his scapegoats.

Sumant, a graduate, married and employed does not reside at the parental home. He is jealous of his eldest brother who is living with his parents as he thinks Hemant has no expenses and no problems. He has a poor opinion of his father. Even *shirsasan*, the only discipline Anant permits himself is the object of his ridicule:

“Seems to be a good way of shedding worries and responsibilities.”
(RS 40)

Thus he calls his father irresponsible by implication. We wonder what sense of responsibility he shows to others in his conduct.

Sharad, the youngest of the four, is Akka’s favourite who provides him with good clothes and permits him to continue even after he failed. After getting a third class graduate degree, he wanted to enter a medical college. That is not because of genuine interest in the medical profession but simply because of money and prestige it was likely to bring in. As his father could not support

him in the pursuit he did not hesitate to blame him. It is only under pressure from Indu that he joined the hotel business and prospered.

Anant cuts a sorry figure before his sons. He cannot afford to pay taxes and repair his house and is also an easy scapegoat to them as evident from his sarcastic remark:

“Who did not give Hemant a good education? Me. Who didn’t help Sumant when he wanted some money after his marriage? Me. Who can’t give Sharad money for entering a medical college? Me.” (RS 53)

It is only when the arrogant Sharad taunts Indu, he gathers courage to rebuke him. Thus the relationship between Anant and his sons is a departure from the traditional model. As the latter are neither bright nor industrious and successful, tradition would advise them to submit to their destiny. Instead, they dare to criticize their father. And Anant, unlike a traditional father, blames himself for the situation.

Govind is a widower and journalist by profession. His job keeps him away from home and his daughter Indu is reared by the elders in the family. However, he plays an important role in her life by insisting on sending her to an English medium school. That decision gives Indu the necessary head start in life. He is “so complete a person” (RS 164) to both Naren and Jayant. Unlike the rest of the family, he married intercaste. So he does not object to it when his daughter too marries outside the community. He attends Indu’s untraditional

marriage with Jayant. He and his elder brother Anant are the only persons in the family to attend the wedding. He never compromises with his ideals and values. Despite his frequent absence from family house, he has left a lasting impression on Indu. Though his simple, considerate nature makes him misfit amid his selfish and quarrelsome kith and kin, he is a role model to Indu who follows his intellectual, moral and social values and aspires to become a freelance journalist and an honest person in life.

Madhav has a son, Sunil and two daughters, Lata and Geeta. He cares little about the education of his daughters. But Sunil's education "was so scrupulously and harshly supervised by him, that Sunil had turned deceitful, with the connivance, of course, of his mother". (RS163) So Sunil gets a third class B.Sc. degree while his sisters do better. Unable to find either an admission anywhere else or an employment, he pretends to be "independent minded" and opts for a course in Business Management in a private institute "where you pay so much money and at the end of a year they give you a diploma that's not worth the paper it is printed on". (RS 65-66) That does not, however, remove his vanity and arrogance. When he walks in the family house with his father, he leaves the latter to carry a suitcase in his both hands. Worst of all, he is parasitical by nature. As long as Akka lived, he extracted money from her to the extent he could and after her death, he challenges Indu's right to her property with the support of Sharad. Like Sharad, he too is scolded for that by his father.

Vinayak, the youngest of the brothers, has three daughters and pays much attention to them. He is so fond of the youngest that goes to the extent of plaiting her hair and tying a bow in her sash. Women disapprove it as a deviation from the normal role of a Hindu male. A licentiate doctor in a small town, he is proud of his “bouncing, healthy girls.” (RS 57, 62) His wife, Kamala seems more concerned only about their prospects of marriage.

Finally, there is Sunanda who has five children. Her husband Vasant is an irresponsible fellow who remains mostly jobless and is recognized as a waster of money by Akka. He leaves the responsibility of the family solely to his wife. Sunanda pampers her son who has failed S.S.C. twice and rushes to the conclusion that the examiners have failed him simply because he is a Brahmin. She is foolish enough to think that all her problems can be solved with a part of Akka’s money if she gets it. Naturally her children are not likely to become independent and industrious.

There is an exceptional case of Vithal too in the novel. His father was a professional cook whose wife left him due to his physical cruelty. Then the boy was subjected to mental torture by his father until he fled and started living by scavenging. Anant found him outside a shabby restaurant and provided him shelter in his house. Old uncle discovered his literary skills and interest in learning and encouraged him. Despite all problems, he has moved on well. His case demonstrates two things. First, the meritorious ones do not sit and moan blaming others. Second, a section of parents do not know that a child needs

food, rest and above all, emotional security as well to grow and learn. Needless to say, such parents fail miserably in relation to their children and become a source of trouble not only for themselves but also their children.

The Dark Holds No Terrors (1990) presents a picture of the traditional Indian household with a “sharp, clean line dividing the world of men from the world of women” (as Shashi Deshpande put it in an interview with Mukta Atrey and Viney Kirpal in May 1989). That set – up leaves the running of the household to the ladies of house. So Sarita’s mother exercised power over the domestic domain.

The way she exercises her power appears far from pleasant to Sarita. She is domineering, oppressive, conservative and malicious in Sarita’s view, a view based on her own unhappy experiences. Early in her life, Sarita observes that her brother Dhruva is treated somewhat differently and given indulgence denied to her. When Dhruva dies of drowning at 7 her mother blames her for the mishap. Her mother opposes her going to a medical college and when she marries outside her caste her ties with the parental house are snapped for 15 years. Even when her mother suffering from stomach cancer dies and is cremated in Bombay, she is not informed. Thus Sarita’s mother appears an agent of the oppressive patriarchal practices to her. In her dislike for her mother, she tries to become as much unlike her mother as possible. Rejection of all that her mother defends leads her to the extent of almost rejecting herself as a woman!

“If you are a woman, I don’t want to be one.” (DHNT 163)

The traditional structure of Indian family has its own dynamics as far as mother – daughter relationship is concerned. The daughter is invariably placed at a third position in the order of priority where the son and the husband take up the first and second slots respectively. A feeling of alienation on the part of the daughter is thus quite natural. The daughter finds it difficult to relate to her mother and struggles to form her own identity – an anti mother identity because she resents the idea of becoming like her.

According to Anna Kurian:

“The mother’s perception of Sarita as Dhruva’s killer effectively ends any identity the former may have had as the daughter of the house.” (Kurian 2006:291)

Sarita’s perception is however not objective. Her hostility is evident and rooted in the accumulated moments of rejection because of her mother’s gender-based discriminatory upbringing. The daughter, representing the new generation is shown as passing through a transitional phase where she is caught between tradition and modernity. The mother failing to realize her daughter’s mental state starts imposing several restrictions and bindings based on her whims and fancies. The case of Sarita during her phase of growing up is an instance to the point.

Jasbir Jain sees this hostility between the mother and the daughter as

“a conflict between claims and roles - Saru’s desire not to be confined within a gender role , her need to be loved like a sibling and to be able to communicate with others.”

(Jain 2003: 49)

Sarita’s mother’s mind is rooted in an unhappy childhood. Sarita’s maternal grandmother, deserted by her husband, had to bring up her two daughters at her parental home. Sarita’s mother was one of them. She grew into a silent and docile woman with “eyes joyless arid, the expression one of indifference.” (DHNT 143) Her childhood feelings of insecurity and unwantedness have affected her personality and motivated her to seek power and cling to it. Conditioned to believe that a girl child must be prepared for her in – laws family, it is not unusual on her part to reject the ideas of female independence, equality and education. That is what leads to her harshness towards Sarita.

The effect of women education in the modern society makes Sarita identify with her mother as she grows old. The modern middle class women represented by Sarita struggle to overcome the unpleasant conflict between imposed restrictions and their free will. On the one hand, is the traditional set up in which they grow up and on the other hand is their modern education which infuses within them a spirit of freedom.

Sarita's father like a traditional father leaves the entire affairs of household, including the upbringing and education of children, to his wife. That was painful to Sarita particularly because her mother's behaviour was so cold. Her distance from her father increases after her brother's death. She perceives him as a weak man dominated by his wife.

That perception however, proves wrong at crucial moments when he supports Sarita's decision to join a medical college in Bombay despite vehement opposition from his wife. He pays for her fees, books and hostel charges out of his meager salary and does not, unlike his wife, bother about its impact on the prospects of her marriage. That is a turning point in Sarita's life and enables her to realize her aspiration of becoming a doctor.

Then, her father plays a decisive role in her life during its most critical phase. Her husband, suffering from inferiority complex, turns a sadist and subjects her to nightly sexual abuse. Strangely enough, Sarita does not seek the advice of some friend or acquaintance in the crisis but goes to her father. He listens to her patiently and advises her against running away from Manu :

“.....Talk to him. Let him know from you what's wrong.....Don't turn your back on things again. Turn round and look at them.” (DHNT 216)

That leads to her realization that it is wrong to hide a man's sexual aberration from him, that she must initiate a discussion with her husband boldly in order to solve the problem.

Though critics have called him the typical Indian father — old fashioned, conservative etc., his advice appears sound and realistic. Unless a woman decides to walk out of her marriage and loses faith in the very institution of marriage itself, there is no other course left open for her under circumstances like that. So it would be better to call him a realist, a compromising man who prefers to avoid quarrel and conflict to the extent possible.

There is another character (minor one) in the novel that deserves attention— Madhav, the son— substitute to Sarita's father. He is a student who lives with Sarita's father, shares odd household work with him and plays carom with him. It is a very easy and warm relationship.

Madhav's parents are living. His father is a learned priest who wants his sons to follow his footsteps and learn Sanskrit. It appears he has left family affairs entirely to his wife. He is not much communicative with his children. Madhav dare not talk or write to him even when his brother Satish is about to ruin his own life. He is ignorant of what his son Satish and daughter Mrinal think and feel. Nor does he care for the choice or opinion of his daughter about her marriage. When Satish disappears he lays the blame at the door of his wife and goes to the extent of refusing to eat anything cooked by her. He has reconciled with Madhav's option for studying Accountancy only in the hope that his other sons or at least one of them will opt for Sanskrit. Thus despite his

learning he is far from being practical. He is insensitive in relation to others and conservative in outlook.

Madhav's mother is more practical and communicative. She manages all the affairs of the family without bothering her husband about them. Her softness for the cine – crazy, terribly wild Satish prevents her from reporting the matter to her husband and she is blamed for it when Satish disappears.

Madhav is honest, studious and independent minded. Much against the wishes of his father, he chooses Accountancy instead of Sanskrit as it is clean and paying. He views his father with awe but feels confident enough to communicate with his mother. So he learns from his mother about Satish's secret visits to town and his threat to run away to Bombay. When Satish disappears, his mother sends a telegram to him. He goes to his village but refuses to go to Bombay in search of Satish as his mother wants in view of his examinations. We cannot but appreciate his decision because preparing for examinations in order to build a career is more worth while than the wild goose chase after a truant, irresponsible boy.

Jaya's father in *That Long Silence (1989)* like Indu's in *Roots and Shadows* is broad – minded and free from the sexist bias and plays an important role in shaping the personality of her daughter. He breaks convention by marrying out of his community for love and setting up a nuclear family. Though he is a favourite of his mother yet he dare not express his independence. Unlike traditional fathers he displays his love for his daughter

and goes to the extent of even encouraging her short temper. He is also particular about her daughter's education and provides her western education. He pulls her out of the safe circle in which the other girls had stood and makes her different from her cousins. He prides rightly in that accomplishment when he says "You are not like others, Jaya." (TLS 136) Indeed, he has made Jaya independent and rational leading her far away from conservatism.

Jaya's relationship with her mother, on the other hand, is not that smooth. She resents her mother's preference for her sons. It appears to her that "She behaves as if she owns me." (TLS 75) Domination is not the only fault she finds with her mother. The latter seems a superficial person devoid of deep feelings in her relationship with her husband. She refers to her daughter "gay and girlish, even after she was made desolate by widowhood" rather disparagingly. (TLS 45-46) Her "slapdash way", her inability to even hem properly make her far from a "perfect mother". (TLS 83) If that were not enough, she accuses her mother of preparing her "for none of the duties of a woman's life." (TLS 83)

Such an accusation is conditioned by patriarchal expectation and explains the paradox apparent here. That is, Jaya resents her sexist bias on one hand and accuses her of neglecting her duty to train her for her future role of wife and mother. However, the paradox plays an important role in Jaya's life as

she aspires to become unlike her mother; a successful wife and mother who holds power and matters.

We learn a little about Jaya's grandmother (Aiji) too. She was a traditional type of woman who wanted to make her children and grandchildren good Brahmins. She too was dominating. She favoured her youngest son Vasu, Jaya's father. Her other sons followed her precept and sent their children to Kannad Schools. Her cousins were, therefore brought up in traditional manner with a pronounced gender bias. Girls of the family like her cousins were taught that it was unwomanly to be angry and it was a woman's job to cook and clean. That is why Veena and Sujata had to clean and not Jaanu and Shridhar.

Vasu, Jaya's Appa loved his mother but had the courage to think and act independently. So instead of choosing a good Kannad girl as his mother desired, he married a Marathi girl. Then he left her soon after the marriage. He was called cruel and his wife was blamed for the decision. It was not only an act of self-assertion but a wise decision to avoid problems of adjustment. Again despite "disapproving and scornful" attitude of his mother, he sent all his three children to English School on pragmatic grounds. (TLS 90)

Vasu and his mother illustrate the fact that affection need not be based on agreement all the time. Vasu cycles three miles to the town to see his mother and goes back to his wife three miles regularly. Jaya holds that the cause of his

death. “She gave up even her single meal” (TLS 137) after his death and died in six months – that is what we learn about Ajji, Vasu’s mother.

Kusum and her parents stand apart from all of the above. What sort of parents did Kusum have?

“A father who cared for nothing but smoking and movies, who never worked a day in his life; a mother whose world centered round her youngest, the baby on her lap, while the rest of her kids ran around in wild abandon, unkempt, dirty, unfed.” (TLS 22)

With parents like that Kusum had hardly any chances. She started wearing a sari at 13, was married early and had three daughters, lived a disorderly life and became mentally deranged. At last she threw herself in a well and died of broken neck.

Only one of the many children of Kusum’s parents, Dilip, became a suave, successful man. Though he failed his Matriculation, he was able to make money and that brought him recognition and admiration from people around him. Finally he built a brand new house on the outskirts of the city “littered with overstuffed sofas, bolsters, cushions.” (TLS 23)

That success, however, was achieved at the cost of morals. He was a muscleman who scared everyone, whose trade union activity included accepting black money from the factory owners. Dilip illustrates the point that

even if one achieves material success, one cannot become a scrupulous person without proper upbringing.

In *The Binding Vine* (1998), Priti leaves her parents in the United States and returns to India alone. Her excuse for the decision is that Robert Kennedy's assassination became the moment of truth – She “could no longer stay in a country that could suffer such pointless violence.” (BV 39)

As a matter of fact, however, she is making a heroine of herself at sixteen by “linking a personal decision to a moment of national drama.” (BV 41)

Her mother is alcoholic, has run over a number of people sleeping on the pavement during one of her annual visits to India and become manic depressive. As life at home becomes impossible for Priti, she leaves. Priti's case illustrates the brittle nature of parent – child relations in the affluent families of the Non Resident Indians.

Vanaa and her daughter present cases of parents failing to satisfy the demands of children. Mandira does not like her mother going to work. She feels her mother Vanaa is neglecting her and her sister Pallavi thereby. True, she has employed Hirabai to attend to them but she thinks that is no substitute for mother. To Vanaa that seems unreasonable.

Vanaa's mother was a teacher. She too had to go out to work but Vanaa did not feel wronged. She is fond of her mother and proud of her. But

she is not entirely satisfied with her other parent – her father. She feels that her father did not love her as Urmi’s father loved Urmi.

Urmi’s father is old fashioned as evident from two major incidents. When she was a child, her mother went out leaving her with a trusted male attendant Diwakar and her father found her crying. He deemed it an offence on the part of his wife to leave the child alone with a male servant. So Urmi was sent to Ranidurg and had to remain there under the care of her grandparents. Later he feels guilty about it. Secondly, he did not like her idea of marrying Kishore initially, though he conceded soon.

With all that, it is evident that he is affectionate and cares for his daughter a lot. He regrets he did not look after her when her son Kartik was born. He trusts her too and leaves his Ranidurg house to her and Amrut. That is an act of no mean trust as with that house is linked the fate of his half – brother Bal kaka. Urmi on her part esteems her father protecting her as pragmatic and firm while her brother, Amrut warns her against over estimating him.

Toward her mother Urmila’s attitude has been full of resentment based on a misunderstanding. As she had been sent away to Ranidurg to be looked after by her grandparents, she perceived that indicative of rejection. Even as a child she expressed her hostility by preferring the old – fashioned, ill – fitting dresses made by her grandmother (Baiajji) to the expensive ones sent by her

mother. She kept the dresses sent by her mother in the cupboard until they became “too small” for her. (BV 9)

Even as a grown up woman she continues in the same vein. Her brother tries to correct her with the information that their father was a domineering person who brooked no challenge. But she pays no heed until her mother reveals the truth that the decision was her fathers who did not care to inform her mother or concede to her requests to bring the child back. That revelation smoothens the relationship between the mother and daughter.

There are two other things here worth noting. Sons and daughters are generally not permitted by tradition to address their parents by name. But Urmi calls her mother Inni (short for Yamini). That is unusual but nobody seems to take exception to that. Secondly, and similarly, unusual is her politeness as she apologizes both to her mother and her son for losing temper.

While all the above characters belong to the affluent or middle class, Shaku tai and her family represent the poor. Shaku tai works in a girls school in the Principal’s Office. She has three children – Kalpana, Sandhya and Akash. Initially, she appears to have a dislike for daughters when she exclaims: “Why does god give us daughters?” (BV 72)

Later we come to know that, in that outburst lies the agony rooted in the sad experiences about the plight of women in the society. She is aware of

the suffering women have to undergo all their lives and does not want its multiplication. Shaku tai and Kalpana belong to the lower strata of society and represent working class women. However, their relationship as mother and daughter is not different from their counterparts in the middle class families.

As a matter of fact, despite her poverty, Shaku tai is an affectionate and caring mother. She does not want to deprive her children of anything. She does not like her children going to other people's houses to watch TV and being treated like beggars by them. So she has bought even a TV set for them.

Kalpana, the eldest is her favourite among them. She likes to talk about her most of the time and permits her to buy what she calls 'rubbish'- hair clips, bands, bangles, nail paints etc. Kalpana is given the indulgence to keep a cat too. Kalpana is smart, stubborn and secretive. She has learnt how to speak English and found a job at a shop for herself.

Though Shaku tai appreciates and pampers Kalpana, she is fearful she will invite trouble for herself if she does not keep a low profile. She shares the prevailing view that young girls provoke boys by appearing in attractive dress and make – up in public. That is the chauvinist approach which ignores women's right to choose their own lifestyle, even their dress — something not unusual in a male dominated society. That is the first difference that makes the mother – daughter relation uneasy. Secondly, Shaku tai does not like her secretiveness about her pay. Thirdly, when her father leaves her mother for

some other woman, she blames not him but her. Thus, the mother – daughter relation is not entirely easy.

Shaku tai and Kalpana's filial relationship is also symbolic of the conflict between tradition and modernity. Shaku tai, in her attempt to see herself in her daughter gives her all facilities which were denied to her – good education, a good job and a respectable marriage. All her dreams are shattered by her daughter's behavior which she considers reckless and painful.

The other daughter, Sandhya, is docile and helpful to her mother and does all she can to keep the home in order. Prakash is critical of his mother and defiant. He believes what other people say about Kalpana's sad plight and holds her mother responsible for the rape of her eldest sister. He holds the silly view that the rape occurred as his mother had permitted Kalpana to get out of hand. When Shaku tai asks him to go to the hospital where Kalpana remains admitted, he goes the first day but refuses to go the next day.

Kalpana's father who remains unnamed in the novel and appears only once before the readers, is hardly an ideal father. He has left his wife and children and lives with some other woman. So he is far from performing his duties as a father. Still, his feelings for his daughters do not seem to be mere pretension.

When he sees Urmila at the hospital, he says,

“Look at her. He should have killed her, the bastard. I wish I could get my hands on him.” To that his wife retorts: “That’s enough of your heroics” and asks “you think this is a film?” Urmila notices that he gives her a look and “has tears in his eyes.” (BV 142-143)

About his feeling for the other daughter, we find the following:

He puts his hand in his pocket and fishes out a small plastic bag.

“Take this, it’s some khau for Sandhya. He calls it ‘khau’ using the child’s word for sweets.

‘Khau’ she repeats bitterly, ‘she’s not a baby.’

‘Give it to her. She’ll eat it.’ (BV 176)

Indeed, Sandhya is no longer a baby. She goes to school now. But to a loving father she remains still a baby. Readers can only wish he were dutiful too to his children. Though he belongs to the lower section of a society that remains patriarchal, he never mentions his only son, Prakash but favours his daughters only.

A Matter of Time (1996) records the relations between parents and children over three generations mainly involving women characters. Kalyani presents the first generation while Manorama belongs to the second. They

belong to the past but make their presence felt in the main narrative which revolves around Sumi and her daughters.

Manorama was the eldest of the four daughters of her parents. She was tall and beautiful. She was sent to a school but had to leave soon as she attained puberty. Custom in those days demanded a girl's marriage before puberty. Still, Vithalrao's father who had chosen her for his son did not object to her marriage. She distanced herself with her poor father's family after marriage and her mother died a year later. So, her relations with her parents did not last long enough and seems to have been more or less formal. But we cannot brand her careless or callous. She cared for her younger brother, got him educated and married him to her daughter, Kalyani.

Manorama like most of the women of those times wanted a son but had only a daughter, Kalyani, after several miscarriages. Moreover she was not brilliant or beautiful. That disappointed Manorama. Her disappointment became deeper and deeper when after her marriage, she bore a son only once and that too was found an idiot. It reached the extreme when she was deserted and returned to her parent's place. To the conservative woman as Manorama was, it was but a disgrace to the family. So she turned hostile to Kalyani. When Vithalrao suffered a stroke and died some time later, she blamed Kalyani for that too: "You are my enemy, you were born to make my life miserable," she declared. (MT153)

In her bitterness for her daughter, Manorama wanted to deprive Kalyani of the opportunity to look after her father in his last days, though she could not.

But there is something far from simple in her behaviour that defies explanation. In her own last illness, she allowed no one but Kalyani to look after her. Kalyani had to experience a lot of mental torture those days because Manorama “was not only tyrannical, she became suspicious and fearful, charging Kalyani with trying to kill her as she had her father.” (MT 153)

As a matter of fact, however, Manorama was the person who ruined Kalyani’s life. Kalyani was good at Mathematics and she could have become an engineer had she not been taken out of school and got her married. At fifteen, Kalyani had received letters from a young man who watched her going to school. Though she had not responded, Manorama held her guilty for it. Much against the wishes of her father, Kalyani’s schooling was abruptly ended at that point by her mother. That shows how conservative and irrational Manorama was.

Kalyani’s relation with her father presents a contrast to it. He was a modern man in the real sense of the word and Kalyani was right in being proud of him. Though he had no son, he refused to remarry or adopt a male child. He preferred leaving his property to his daughter. He wanted to make Kalyani an engineer - “the first woman engineer in the country.” (MT 129) Obviously, he

was not happy when that dream was shattered to pieces by his wife but submitted to her will to keep peace at home. The first rift in his married life is caused by Manorama's harsh treatment of Kalyani when she came back as a deserted wife with two daughters. The shock changed him from a man of science to a man of astrology. Soon he suffered a stroke and became helpless. Kalyani attended him with love and care during his last days and had him "removed from the bed and placed on the floor" before his death. (MT 153) Besides that, we must add that Kalyani never let her daughters know about the injustice her mother had done to her. She absolved her mother of all wrong doing and blamed herself of timidity and dullness.

The novelist contends that Kalyani was right in "playing down everything but her mother's disappointment in her." (MT 150)

To Manorama, Kalyani was not an unloved child, but the "visible symbol offailure to have a son" and moreover she had failed to fulfill all the dreams she had for her daughter. (MT 151)

Thus Manorama represents the type of parents we find around us not infrequently who expect too much from their children and thereby make a hell not only of their own lives but also of their children. Sometimes the children failing to live up to their expectations become depressed and commit suicide. It speaks a lot about Kalyani's mental strength that she survived all the trials.

Kalyani, as a mother is kind and sensitive to her children. She has got a guilt complex too as she lost her only son Madhav at VT Station while coming home to Bangalore. The boy was well grown physically though only four but mentally retarded. As he was frequently violent, Kalyani could not manage him. So she cannot be blamed for the fact that the boy was lost. Still Kalyani believes she is not a good mother. She strives hard to make her daughters Sumi and Premi happy.

Her daughter, Sumi is old enough when she tries to ride a scooter. She is a mother of three daughters by that time.

Still, Kalyani “goes in and out with a nervousness she cannot conceal”.

The moment Sumi feels confident and goes out of the gate speedily, she says: “She shouldn’t have done that, she shouldn’t have gone out on the road.” (MT 34)

Such an outburst is absurd because nobody learns riding the scooter to whiz around in the front yard but it shows the extreme anxiety and concern the mother has for her daughter.

As an untoward event has ruined her married life, she does not want repetition of something similar in case of her daughter. That is why when she learns about the desertion of Sumi by her husband Gopal, she cries out ‘no, my god, not again’. (MT 12) She tries her level best to argue with and convince

Gopal so that he comes back and lives happily with Sumi. Her effort bears no fruit but it shows her real maternal feelings.

While Kalyani had a mother who made her life painful, the role is reversed in case of her daughters. The father plays the role of a cold, indifferent parent here. We hardly find a trace of tenderness in his relation with his daughters. Most of what we learn about him comes not from Sumi, but Premi. Sumi prefers not to say any thing about him. Premi informs us that her father Sripati never came out of his room and spoke to anyone. Premi did not hear even a word from him until she was ten and then what he said to her for the first time was a question asking her why she was there. The first he summons her and speaks is after completion of her medical finals and that too to announce her marriage with Anil. Ever since her marriage, Premi goes to her room as a matter of formality whenever she visits her parental home but the distance between the two makes it an ordeal for her. She finds it odd that though her father speaks about her husband and father – in – law, he says nothing about Sumi and Gopal. Sripati, thus, does not represent a normal parent. A normal human being, a father or mother in his or her senses, is expected to think about the present and not the past – to think about what one has and not what one has lost all the time. True Sripati has lost a son but that is hardly a right excuse for penalizing his wife and daughters all the time. That is irrational and inhuman. His irrationality has ruined his own life and also the lives of his daughters. One

of his daughters is lucky enough that she is married in a family where people talk to each other easily, hug and touch and use words of endearment so casually. That is an alternative undoubtedly preferable but that comes out of sanity and understanding and not obsession.

Sumi has three daughters – Aru, Charu and Seema. Aru occupies a prominent place among them. Though only seventeen, she behaves like an adult willing to shoulder responsibilities, help the family and keep it going in good shape. Her father thought she was born an adult. Though she loves her parents and cares for them, she is unlike a traditional girl revering her parents and viewing them in awe. She addresses her mother as Sumi as if she is a dear friend. Her mother thinks she is hostile to her and blames her for Gopal's departure:

“The sight of Premi flanked by her daughters, the hostility on Aru's face as she said, ‘I rang her up’, had made Sumi feel suddenly vulnerable. The three of them ranged against me. Am I the enemy? Do you daughters blame me for what Gopal has done?” (MT 23)

But Sumi's perception does not necessarily mean the whole truth.

Thus we find the following in the novel:

“Seeing her mother's face, hollow – eyed, hair disheveled, Aru feels a pang; this is how she will look when she is old. But when Sumi

comes out of the bathroom after her bath, smoothing down the pleats of her sari, she looks so reassuringly normal that Aru has a sudden lift of spirits.” (MT 30)

This shows how much she cares for her mother.

Her argument with her sister Charu too reveals her real feelings:

‘Why do you call her “She”?’

‘What?’

‘Why do you call Sumi “She”?’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Can’t you say “She”?’ Sumi, or Ma or anything else...

‘Why do you say “She”?’

‘Hey cool it, Aru, what’s with you?’

“Just because Papa has left her, it doesn’t give you the right to be rude to her, it doesn’t mean she is worthless...” (MT 57)

She cannot tolerate rudeness or insult to her mother under any circumstances.

Sumi's break down shows a reversal of roles in the mother – daughter relationship.

“Aru moves forward to steady her mother.”(MT 34)

“..... and Charu holds the sobbing Sumi close to her own body and “rocks her, as if she is the mother and her mother her child, until both of them are soothed into a tearless calm.”(MT 112)

Aru fails to understand her mother's passive acceptance of her husband Gopal's action and not taking a stand against him.

According to Usha Bande, Aru represents the young modern generation: “In Aru's resistance there is the younger generation's impatience and restlessness to obtain justice.” (Bande 2005: 196)

Her feelings for her mother deepen after the latter's sudden death. Reading the type script of the story ‘The Gardener's Son’, she realises that her mother was not “uncaring, indifferent” to any one and she had misunderstood her. (MT 240)

Aru's relationship with her father hardly conforms to the tradition which demands awe, reverence and uncritical submission to the father. Gopal, her father, wrote an article which was supposed to be for Brahmanism. He was attacked and beaten for it by the students. The charge was absurd as he was never proud of his caste. His father had “disclaimed him as a Brahmin out of disgust when they revealed him for marrying his brother's widow” and “being a

Brahmin meant nothing” to him. (MT 218) Still, Gopal retracted the article.

That made Aru furious who called him a coward. That shows she is outspoken and does not hesitate to criticize her elders when she deems them wrong.

Aru is emotional by nature and takes the departure of her father hard.

When her mother proceeds to vacate their rented house, she does not like it. She hopes that Gopal will return and that they will be able to resume their lives. Her love for her father makes her hope that her father will return one day himself or can be persuaded to do that. It is only the realization that they cannot afford to pay the rent for that house any longer compels her to give in.

Her mother, Sumi, realizes the fact and considers it her fate but Aru does not understand it. She mistakes it for apathy on the part of her mother. She wants to reclaim her past and live with both of her parents the way a child lives in a family usually. So she goes twice to her father and tries to bring him back. During the first visit, she begins like a cool, reasonable adult asking polite questions about him but breaks down at last; unable to control herself. During the second visit she is unrestrained. She accuses him and threatens legal action against him. Both the visits end in failure as Gopal does not come back.

Now, Aru begins to think seriously about legal action against her father. She writes to her uncle Anil asking him for legal advice. Then she seeks help from Surekha, a social worker and feminist. But Gopal sticks to his resolve. Thus we find that despite her love for her parents she is demanding.

She expects them to live a normal life with their daughters and she is uncompromising in that respect. When they fail, she goes to the extent bordering hostility – quite reverse of a mild, submissive girl.

Aru's sisters differ in their response to the changed situation. While Aru becomes secretive and cares less for her college and studies and resigns from student's council, Charu becomes "Single minded and dogged": "Nothing else seems to exist for her, apart from her college, her evening classes and her books when she is at home." (MT 59) She intends to pursue her course of five years and a half at medical college with the help of her maternal aunt. Thus she seems to be a stern realist and a careerist. That Gopal has left the family does not appear important to her. She perceives it as nothing more than her parent's hassles, as evident from the following advice to her sister: "Listen to me, Aru, let's not get involved in their hassles let's go on with our lives. All these things are not important." (MT 58) Naturally she does not go to her father to persuade him and deems Aru's attempts to do that futile.

It would be easy to conclude from the above that Charu is rather cold and callous. But when her mother gets a job and decides to go to Devagiri, she is "the first to react, suddenly and to her own surprise, bursting into tears." (MT 229-230) Her grief becomes louder and uncontrollable when she learns that Seema has learned about the job first and going to Devagiri with her mother. She calls it "not fair." (MT 230)

Thus we find that Charu is not insensitive or hard as she tries to show herself. Her real self concealed behind a hard shell of apparent self – centeredness is revealed after the death of her mother when she sobs and repents:

“I was selfish, I should have spent more time with her, I kept saying, “my exams, my studies” I never sat down with her, if only I had known.” (MT 241)

She makes a similar gesture when Gopal returns from the burning ground. Charu moves toward him in rain and brings him to the rest of the mourners.

The novelist has little to say about Sumi’s youngest daughter. Her mother feared most about her reaction to father’s desertion but she has proved her fears misplaced. She looks the most untouched and keeps aloof from her mother and sisters, spending most of her time with her grandmother, Kalyani. The next thing we learn about her is regarding her visit to her father. She turns down Aru’s offer to accompany her. Thus, Gopal and Seema remain unaware of each other, a gulf of distance remains between them. But there is no hint of bitterness or resentment. Seema, the youngest, therefore appears the most calm and composed in relationship with her parents.

In *Small Remedies* (2001), we find both types of parents and children – loving and caring as well as the indifferent ones. Madhu and her father and Adit

and his parents symbolize the first type of the relationship while Savitribai and Munni represent the second type.

Madhu was born a year after the marriage of her parents. As her mother died of tuberculosis when she was only six months old she was deprived of one of her parents by fate. Her father brought her up with the help of a servant, Babu. It was not an easy task as he was a professional, a doctor. Yet he looked after her with care and affection which gave a secure childhood to her.

There is an incident in the novel that reveals his concern and sound conduct in the upkeep of his daughter. Munni asks Madhu to gift her gold ear – rings on her birthday. When Madhu asks her how she can get the money, Munni suggests her to take it from the open drawer of her father. The plan comes to naught as the jeweler comes in the way and reports to Madhu's father. He buys the rings and presents them to Munni himself while Madhu is directed to give some sweets instead to Munni on her birthday. Madhu's father keeps the drawer locked since then.

As an affectionate father, he knows that the motherless child needs company. However, he does not allow her to go to movies with Munni who lives in the neighborhood next door. Instead, he accompanies her to movies. Again, it proves to be a wise decision.

The love and care Madhu receives fills her with faith in her father. Munni's statement about her father's affair with a woman does not move her. At that age, the fact of his having a mistress does not mean anything to her. It is beyond her capacity to understand its implication but the vulgarity of the narration horrifies Madhu and she feels sick. That ends her brief friendship with Munni. Her father's death at Bombay cuts her away and she finds herself alienated from every one. But soon she comes to know that her father has not left her in lurch, he has left her in the care of an aunt. That aunt Leela is a loving, inspiring and a radiant personality who leaves a lasting impression on Madhu. This too demonstrates wise and caring nature of her father. Madhu and her husband Som are remarkable for their loving and caring attitude toward their son, Adit. Madhu who has lost her parents in early life showers all her affection as long as her son is alive. She is worried that he too may lose his parents one day like her and seeks an alternative in Tony and Rekha. She believes that they will look after him properly if he loses his parents. Som wants to make good money after his birth so he can bring him up decently. He was not a teetotaler before his birth but stops drinking after his death.

Thus both of them are ideal parents but it would be far from truth to think that they are free from human weaknesses. That is particularly true about Som who disturbs the peace of home when a forgotten incident of the adolescent life of Madhu is revealed to him by her. Adit who never appears in

the novel as a living person is a promising, intelligent and sensitive boy of seventeen. One day he leaves home annoyed by the quarrels of his parents and dies a terrible death. He dies in the Bombay blasts following the demolition of Babri Masjid.

The relationship between Munni and her parents stands apart from all the above, Munni is Savitri bai and Ghulam Saab's illegitimate daughter. Savitri bai, a married Brahmin woman comes into contact with Ghulam in course of her pursuit of music, becomes intimate with him and gives birth to a child, Munni. Though the "child is a beginning, a renewal, a continuation, an assertion of immortality" as the novelist puts it. (SR 168) Munni is barely a year old when Savitri bai abandons her as she leaves her husband's home with Ghulam Saab. Later she keeps Munni with her at Neemgaon but does not pay much attention to her.

She calls her in sharp voice and even slaps her once. As Savitri bai remains busy with her own pursuit of music, Munni feels almost ignored. She moves in the company she chooses and goes to movies alone. As case of typical indifference is narrated at length in the novel, Munni takes part in the school concert and plays jaltarang. While most of the parents are present to watch the concert, Savitribai is not there. After the concert is over, Munni walks home with Madhu and her father. Madhu's father notices the apathy of Munni's

mother and pities her. Later Savitribai sends her away and deliberately forgets her. She does not bother even when Munni dies in the Bombay blast.

Ghulam Saab, her father, is gentle and kind. But as his relationship with her mother is not socially approved, she denies he is her father. She begins with rejecting the name given to her by her parents and chooses the name Meenakshi instead. In her attempt to look different from her parents, particularly her father Ghulam Ahmad, she treats her own natural good looks with lofty disdain and tends to distort her features.

As the novelist puts it:

“She resembled her mother more than her father, but her eyes, her light grey eyes, cat’s eyes, as they were called, unmistakably linked her to the man she strenuously disclaimed as father.” (SR 75)

She calls Ghulam a cruel man, a kidnapper who has taken her to Neemgaon by force and is keeping her there against her will. She hankers after the identity her mother has left behind. Ghulam on his part, loves her daughter deeply and when she leaves him and goes back to Pune, he starts drinking to suppress his feeling of loss.

Savitri bai is stern, uncaring and negligent to her daughter. Munni too reciprocates the same feelings. Her mother’s life style means disgrace to her and she tries to cut herself from it. Her mother’s talent, her looks and her

associates are all allergic to her. An instance to the point is her refusal to attend Savitri bai's performance at the inauguration of the new radio station at Neemgaon. "I hate music", she declares bluntly. (SR 135)

Later she leaves her mother and goes to Pune or is sent there, marries and becomes known as Shailaja Joshi. That seems to be the goal she has been ever eager to achieve. Thus she gains an identity separate from her mother. But it is ironical that all her endeavour comes to naught in the end as the obituary published after her death refers to her as the "only daughter of Savitribai Indorekar." (SR 225) How different that is from her wedding card which contained names of her father and grandfather, but not the name of her mother.

In *Moving On (2004)* we come across four generations of people. First we learn a little about Gayatri's grandfather and her father. Gayatri's grandfather was an orthodox wealthy landlord. As he lived in ease, he cared little about education but still Gayatri's father got a graduate degree as it was supposed to "enhance family's prestige and status" and expected to "increase the amount of dowry." (MO 4) The old man had a foul tongue and was proud of his caste.

His son, Gayatri's father was a rebel "whose actions scrupulously followed his convictions." (MO 4)

Education made him a Gandhian who disliked “a life of lordly inactivity,” (MO 6) had no respect for his parent’s belief in rituals, feasts etc. He did not concur with their presumption of superiority of the Brahmins, refused to attach enormous importance to food and rejected their idea of purity. He went to jail which amounted to treachery on the part of a son of Roy Bahadur with the additional horror that he lived in close contact with men of all castes including Muslims. Then he married a Harijan girl – an orphan brought up as a daughter by his guru which came “like the end of the world” to his parents. (MO 5)

The conflict of ideas ended their relations. He walked out on his parents and his father disowned his son ritually and disinherited him legally. There was a complete severance as the son too “cast off even his family name.” (MO 6) But the son had a soft corner for his mother. After his release from jail, his parents decided to perform a puja for purification. Though he did not believe he had become impure and made his family too by going to jail, he acquiesced “mainly so as not to displease his mother” (MO 6) but proved adamant in his resolve to marry a Harijan girl as there could be no compromise on principles. Obviously his mother too was not happy about it but she could find no rescue for what he had done. So here is a case of severe conflict of ideas leading to complete severance of relations, a case of heterodox son’s revolt against parental orthodoxy reaching its logical conclusion. In an acquisitive

society where people often sacrifice their principles for sake of wealth, Gayatri's father foregoes all for his convictions.

Gayatri's father had two children – Gayatri and Badri Narayan. Complete severance from his parents and loss of two wives had made him a joyless man. He smiled sometimes but never laughed. He was a quiet man who spoke rarely and when he did, he spoke softly. But he did not make his home a sad or melancholy one for his children; they lived a normal life.

Though he was always available to his children, when they needed him, he was not authoritarian or interfering. Unlike their friends, Gayatri and Badri Narayan enjoyed a kind of freedom which was quite unusual in those days. That freedom made it possible for them to have a gathering of a mixed group of friends, boys and girls, at their home. Gayatri was not denied that freedom as her father was did not have a discriminating attitude in the case of his daughter. As a matter of fact, most of the gatherings were of her friends.

As a considerate father, he attaches utmost importance to the education of both his daughter and his son. He cared to leave enough money so that her son could get through medical college. When Gayatri resolved to marry RK, “a very estimable young man, with a promising future”, he could not obstruct. He knew Gayatri would be “both comfortable and happy” but he “was unhappy that Gayatri's education be interrupted.” (MO11)

That was rather unusual in a society where parents often interrupted their daughter's education for the sake of marriage.

Unlike the traditional type of father, he did not inspire fear in his children and did not remain unapproachable to them. Though he was an inarticulate man yet he made his son feel confident in his last days. It was his openness that made it possible for RK and Gayatri to talk to him about their desire to marry. When Badri Narayan was admitted to medical college, he celebrated the occasion by going to a movie with his daughter and son.

Naturally his children loved him deeply. When Gayatri learned about his heart attack, she came and stayed with him for two months and his death left her distraught and inconsolable. Badri Narayan was also hit hard by his father's death, though he recognized it only when he went to his hostel. He had a feeling of "blankness that seemed to swallow" him up. (MO 14) Later, he had "a great satisfaction in remembering him and our relationship, in seeing things I never did then." (MO 13)

In the next generation, Gayatri has no children and Badri Narayan has two daughters – Manjari (Giji) and Malu. However, BK's son Raja attends Gayatri and Badri Narayan despite his mother's resentment and they too treat him as their own. When RK dies and Gayatri finds it hard to move into her new home Raja comes and stays with them. Then he plans two rooms on the first

floor for Badri Narayan. He remains with Gayatri and Badri Narayan when the latter's wife dies and helps him after Gayatri's death.

Badri Narayan found pleasure in working, thinking and loving children, specially his children, "was a constant source of delight" to him. (MO 55) His children received proper attention and a healthy environment in their early life as both of their parents had enough time for them and there were uncles, aunts and cousins too to get pleasure and emotional security as is evident from Manjari's recollection.

Complications, however, arise when the daughters grow up. Manjari, the elder one, falls in love with a Sindhi cinematographer, Shyam. As she declares her intent to marry him, both her parents are annoyed. Badri Narayan's objection is based on the fact that she has not completed her studies and the marriage will disrupt it. And as a matter of fact, she does not continue her studies. As her father tells her later, it is like committing suicide. He wants her to graduate and become a doctor before she marries but she is not willing to wait for five years even though she is too young. Her refusal to wait disappoints her father. Vasu's disapproval of Manjari's marriage with Shyam is based on different considerations. Shyam belongs to different community, his profession is disreputable and his income is not steady. Besides these, she invents other grounds like Shyam's rudeness for her disapproval. She goes on to declare that her love for Shyam is "only physical" etc. (MO 187)

The marriage takes place at last due to the resolute stand of Manjari. As for her father, he is liberal and takes it rather easy. His attitude is well expressed in his speech to Manjari:

“It’s your life. You have to live it the way you want. As long as you’re happy.” (MO 250)

To her mother it is surrender after defeat and bitterness remains. It is a heart break too for her. Even though the parents visit her after her marriage and she too goes to them for Anand’s birth, their relations remain estranged particularly due to Vasu. Later Badri regrets he has failed to stand by her when she needed because of the opposition from his wife. However, she visits her parents before her mother’s death but Vasu goes into coma before her arrival. Again, she comes to her father when she learns about his illness (cancer) and attends him in his last days.

Badri Narayan is quite friendly with Manjari and Raja during his last days. He drinks with them on Saturday evenings something a traditional father can not even dream of. As a medical expert, he is aware of the demands of body and when he discerns Raja’s gestures, he does not disapprove of it. Instead, he hopes she will respond to it. He feels that as she has lost her husband Shyam, she need not spend the rest of her life the way a traditional widow does. Instead she should remarry and Raja will be a suitable match for the purpose.

Eventually Manjari turns down Raja's advances but Badri Narayan's desire expressed in his diary testifies to his sane, liberal approach.

Manjari becomes eccentric after her father's death. She takes long bus rides without any definite purpose which appears odd to the bus conductors. In fact, that is her way to escape loneliness and sense of loss. Her initial reaction to her father bequeathing his house not to her but to Sachi is a feeling of being "cheated, betrayed done out of something that" is hers. (MO140) As Sachi ignorant of the truth, thinks that is a punishment for some commission or omission on Manjari's part, she is embarrassed about it even more. But sooner than later Manjari overcomes that feeling. We find her resist all the threats from the underworld and protect the house in deference to his will.

Despite all her bitterness for her mother, she does not disappoint her in the critical moment. When Malu, though unmarried becomes pregnant, her mother devises a plan to save the honour of the family and Manjari cooperates with her to carry out that plan and when Malu dies of a post – natal complication after giving birth to a daughter (Sachi) she adopts her as her own to fulfill her wishes. So, she is compassionate and considerate in her dealings.

Raja, the son of B K belongs to the same generation as Manjari. But his relationship with his parents is not that smooth. He is a responsible son with a high standard of filial duty. That is why he grumbles when his sister does not visit their parents even once in a month excusing herself on the ground of being

awfully busy though she is living in the same city. He does not think it suffices on her part to ring every day.

As a teenager Raja becomes annoyed of his father's constant disapproval of everything he does, his sarcasm and his admonition. So as soon as he graduates he leaves home on the pretext of wanting to work with a firm of architects in Bangalore and staying with Gayatri (who is left alone after the death of RK) at the same time. Raja stays with Badri Narayan and an easy, intimate relationship develops between them. At last Raja becomes sympathetic towards his father but his relation with his mother, Kamala remains strained. This is because Kamala, formerly a gentle, soft – spoken, perfect housewife has now become a nagging woman. She is always complaining about her husband as she thinks he is neglecting his duty as a father leaving his daughter Hemi unmarried. The fact, however, is that Hemi is abnormal and therefore quite incapable of shouldering the responsibilities of a married woman. First, Raja has merely to listen to his mother's complaints against his father and then his mother starts on him too. Secondly, Raja refuses to marry the girl chosen by his mother and marries Rukku, a Tamil girl instead. That is the other reason of her disappointment and resentment.

Pawan, Anand and Sachi are the children of the next generation. Pawan is the only son of Raja while Anand is Manjari's son. Sachi is the daughter of Manjari's husband, Shyam born of his extra – marital relation with

Manjari's sister, Malu. As Malu dies of a post – natal complication, Manjari has adopted her as her own daughter such a way that Sachi does not ever suspect it.

Though in her conversation with Raja, Manjari complains about the secretiveness of her own children like that of Raja's Pawan, she has given all liberties to them. They dare criticize her when they feel it necessary. For example, Anand does not hesitate to let her know it when she uses "a word he thinks mothers shouldn't use." (MO 68) However, they are friendly and attach utmost importance to her health and safety. Though Manjari does not like the idea of selling the house, she leaves it to Sachi to decide conceding to her will. Sachi's motive behind her idea of selling the house is not commercial. She thinks Badri Narayan has done wrong by leaving the house for her alone and intends to set it right by selling the house and buying a flat jointly in the names of Anand, herself and Manjari. Thus she deserves the characterisation as a good fairy done by Manjari.

To conclude, though we find merely his name mentioned in the novel sometimes, Pawan too is sympathetic and considerate towards his father. Raja is so confident about the three that when he wants to marry Manjari, he feels they will not oppose it. Eventually the marriage does not take place as Manjari does not respond to Raja's proposal, but it shows the amount of understanding between the people of two generations.

Mukta Atrey and Viney Kirpal express the general view of the critics when they state that

“a better daughter – father equation than a daughter – mother equation” is the “usual pattern in Deshpande’s fiction” (Atrey and Kirpal 1988: 61)

Such a statement means little if the general and specific context of the equation is ignored. It is worthwhile to see what sort of son – father and son – mother equations we find in Deshpande’s novels and then to discuss the social significance of the pattern. We have discussed above the novels and it is not difficult to see that even though mothers tend to pamper their dull, lazy or parasitical sons sometimes, fathers realize the merits of their daughters in some cases. That is a healthy sign in a patriarchal society where girls are generally viewed as an unwanted burden. That mothers pamper their unworthy sons shows that limited, insufficient nature of their experience. It would not be so pleasant to staunch feminists but it is reality that most of the women are still lagging behind in education and experience. Any attempt to deny that will serve as a plea for status quo and would not improve their lot.

Tradition gave absolute power to parents over their children, particularly to the father. Though the scriptures asked parents to bring up their children properly, their emphasis was always on rights of the parents. The parents could give them to others for adoption, could sell them, banish them

and even kill them. We find in the Ramayana, that Dasarath banished his son, Ram for fourteen years for no fault of his. Ajjigarta attempted to sacrifice his son Sunapshep as an offering to the deity Varun. In the Bible, we come across a similar tale about the patriarch who attempted to sacrifice his son for Jehova. The lives were saved in both cases but the tales illustrate the traditional view that the parents had unlimited power over their children. Cases of sale and desertion were not rare, though generally people sold their children during famine or calamity and desertions occurred as they still occurred sometimes, when the latter defied social norms.

Tradition taught children to revere their parents, scriptures declare that children are born indebted to parents and they ought to be grateful to them. They should not address their parents by name or even utter their name in conversation. They were not expected to question or challenge their decisions.

Instead they had to carry out their orders. Nobody could speak ill of one's elders, not to speak of parents. Blind adherence was norm sanctioned by the traditional for children. Needless to say, that gave utmost relief of the men of licentious character who married a large number of women and had a large number of concubines and had no qualms of conscience to look after their children. Those unfortunate ones rotted in neglect deprived of education, medical care or even basic needs in many cases. Tradition provided ample opportunities to elder brother etc. too to exploit cheat and abuse younger ones.

Whatever the real intent of the author; the Ramayana is popular with many a father nowadays who shirks from his responsibility towards his children. It is also the favoured text of the cruel and deceitful elder brothers. Such people interpret the epic as the gospel of servility to silence the younger.

While modern thought does not favour corporal punishment, tradition attaches utmost importance to it. Spare the rod, and spoil the child said the tradition. In India, traditionally it was held that children were to be looked after affectionately for first five years and treated severely for ten years and to be treated as friends on attaining the sixteenth year. Such wisdom ignored the sensitivity of the child and the adolescent. Modern pedagogy prohibits corporal punishment and teaches respect for the personality of the young. Older generations paid no attention to the needs of children. There were persons who taught in schools for years and still thought that toys made little ones greedy and the young needed no games and sports for their development. Such faulty notions die hard.

True, a lot of change has taken place during the last century. Still, all is not well with the children in India. According to a UNESCO report, for 2000 there were more than 72 million children deprived of basic education belonging to the age group 5 – 14. Again, India's Labour Commission Report, 2001 gives the number of working children more than 100 million, ten times more than the official figures available from the Census and NSS reports. Among the illiterate

working class families, children suffer a lot at the hand of the alcoholic fathers. They are subjected to malnutrition and receive medical care hardly. Generally, ignorance accompanies poverty with the result that often parents are superstitious. Whether it is a case of snake bite or some disease they turn to the magic remedies which are not always cheap as we usually think, but in variably useless and often fatal.

Children of the well – to – do families receive education and training their guardians deem worth while. They do receive all they need materially to make one happy. But that too is possible only if the parents are loving, attentive and wield power in the family. But when the parents are dead or powerless, they are left at the mercy of others who do not treat them with such affection and care. Home becomes a terrible place to the young ones when there are frequent quarrels in the family among the elders, the worst case being the quarrels between the parents. We find a fictionalized account of the plight of a child left at the mercy of others in *David Copperfield* while Gorky's *My Childhood* presents a real version.

Shashi Deshpande's novels focus mainly on middle class families. Hunger and malnutrition are not the problems there. But the children in such families often miss their parents if they are employed. Some of them are sensitive to the emotional needs of their children; some of them are careless and irresponsible. Kusum's father in *The Binding Vine* is not employed and does not

care to do anything, while parents of Adit in *Small Remedies* and of Manjari in *Moving On* present due type who try their best to make their children happy. But sometimes they forget that money alone does not suffice to make everybody happy. When Som in *Small Remedies* make the most of the pre-marital sexual encounter of his wife with a painter, an isolated incident which she had forgotten and failed to mention to him, he destroys the peace of the home. His son leaves the house and gets killed in the blasts. Similarly BK's son leaves his parents as his mother's obsessive concern about her abnormal daughter Hema's marriage becomes unbearable to him in *Moving On*. That shows even the educated, and responsible parents are not as careful in maintaining the peace and harmony at home as they ought to be.

Sometimes parents' ambition ruins the life of the child. Educationists and psychologists attach utmost importance to aptitudes and capabilities of the child and seek to provide suitable conditions for the development of his or her potentials. Ignorant of all that, some parents attempt to make their children doctors, engineers, chartered accountants or business administrators. When they fail, they treat them harshly or humiliate them. Even if they do not move to that extreme, their neighbours do not spare them. Children who fail to live up to those expectations tend to become depressed and sometimes meet with a tragic end. Every year, we find reports in the newspapers about the students who failed and committed suicide to escape humiliation. We are also well aware of

the tragic end of sub – junior table – tennis player Biswadip Bhattacharya (14) who died on January 8th, 2007 – a victim of his father’s ambition. Unfortunately, there is no dearth of the ambitious guardians like Biswadip’s father in middle class families.

Shashi Deshpande’s *Manorama* in *A Matter of Time* presents that type of such ambitious parents. First, she wanted a son and became disappointed when she got a daughter, Kalyani. Many men and women even today are ignorant of the scientific truth that the sex of children depends on the mixing of the chromosomes which is purely accidental. They also forget that the human race needs both sexes for its preservation and reproduction. *Manorama* got even more disappointed when she found that the daughter was not beautiful. When Kalyani bore a son, and that too an idiot and was deserted by her husband, her dreams were totally shattered. That made *Manorama* hostile to Kalyani. She blamed Kalyani for making her life miserable though the truth was quite contrary to her accusation.

In Shashi Deshpande’s novels, daughters are found to rebel against their mothers. According to Medha Sachdev, “Deshpande’s novels do not valorize motherhood. In fact, the bond between mother and daughter is perpetually under question.” (Sachdev 2011:182)

She has thus deconstructed the classical Indian myth of a loving mother, a person symbolic of care, sacrifice and forgiveness. In her novels

mothers are shown to have common human characteristics like selfishness, jealousy, possessiveness, and often even cruelty.

According to Shalmalee Palekar:

“The conflict between mother and daughter is presented by author as a conflict between tradition and modernity, a clash between freedom and dependence, of the assertion of selfhood and the need for love in relationships.” (Palekar 2005:60)

Shashi Deshpande’s novels focus mainly on mother – daughter relationship. The other aspect of filial relationship characterized by father – daughter bond finds limited portrayal. However, within the limitations, it is presented on a positive note. Even though fathers in her novels are representative of the different aspects of masculinity and patriarchy, yet they are more progressive in their ways of thinking and outlook. They are shown as going against the social norms by allowing their daughters to pursue higher studies and getting married according to their choice. They play the role of a true guide, advisor and supporter; sympathizing with their daughters. They play a significant role in the multi – dimensional development of their daughters.

To conclude, our society has not as yet reached where parents and children live in an ideal relationship pleasant to both. There are a lot of obstacles in the way. Poverty, ignorance, superstitions and gender are the main ones. But the novels of Shashi Deshpande present a promising glimpse of the

changes taking place around us. On one hand we find the children striving to assert themselves in different ways, and on the other we find the parents trying to grasp the reality and realize the demands of new age, the sensibilities and aspirations of new generation. There in lies the hope for the future, though a lot remains to be achieved.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

CROSSING BARRIERS – FROM TRADITION TO MODERNITY

The foregoing study enables us to conclude that Shashi Deshpande is unique in bringing to the fore a social problem so far overlooked by the authors of novels and short stories. However, the novelist approaches social problems rather superficially and conventionally and offers no suggestions to solve them. Rape, including marital rape is the only exception. Society blames the victim instead of the victimizer in cases of rape which discourages the victim and her relations to fight back. The practice of hushing up cases of rape permits the culprit to escape scot free. Marital rape takes place mostly in cases where the wife is much younger than the husband. But that is not always the case.

The conventional patriarchal structure has conferred upon man the 'right' to use a woman's body according to his whims and fancies. It may be with or without her consent. So, the marginalization of women is twofold; firstly because she is a woman and secondly the conventional social structure considers her inferior to man.

Traditionally marital rape has been treated as a non – issue in society. Both law and religion have given almost total mastery of the wife's body to her

husband. Solution to the problem of marital rape seems to demand a change in the thinking of the husband. He is expected to treat his wife as a partner, not an object.

Deshpande tries to stress the fact that the traditional gulf between parents and children has not disappeared but there are signs of its shrinking slowly. Preference for male child still prevails and some parents make a hell of their own lives and of their family when they lose a male child. Some parents still want to impose their choice in respect of marriage and career on their children but they are not sure of their ground as reality does not seem to favour them all the time. Intelligent ones among the children, both male and female, are asserting themselves in the choice of career and marriage and sensible parents are awakening to the new conditions. That is bound to develop an understanding between parents and children. Working mothers often face the dissatisfaction of their children as the latter miss them when they are at their job.

It is seen that the lives of middle class women oscillating between traditional and modern roles are mostly highlighted in Shashi Deshpande's novels. Women have progressed a lot in the sense that they are getting higher education, learning several languages and adopting careers like journalism, lecturer ship, medicine, law etc. Some of them are becoming singers, political leaders and trade unionists as well. They are asserting themselves in the choice

of career and marriage too. Many protagonists of Shashi Deshpande's novels have married beyond caste, language and/or religion. However, the less intelligent ones have no option but to submit to the dictates of tradition. Women still face a lot of difficulties in society. Not a few parents still deem it better to provide for higher education of the son and save money for dowry and marriage of the daughter. They are still expected to marry not beyond caste, language or religion. Certain occupations are deemed especially suitable for women while the rest are considered otherwise. That stands in the way of women who, for example, aspire to become singers. Political parties and trade unions are dominated by men and only a few women (widows or relations of a deceased leader) are able to rise to the positions they otherwise deserve.

Shashi Deshpande through her novels has highlighted the sharp contrast between the traditional women with their biased mindset who prefer getting their daughters married than pursuing a career and modern women symbolized by their priority for empowerment and personal opinion. Women characters in her novels resist obeying the established and accepted patriarchal social set up. They question the authoritative attitude and supremacy of the masculine gender refusing to be reduced to mere stereotypes. Therefore, they face a constant struggle to establish their position and identity in the society.

The novelist shows how society despite all the progress in science and technology, despite loud talks of democracy and socialism remains based on

inequality and exploitation and nourishes the same. Capitalist society, like its feudal predecessor sustains patriarchy which means the supremacy of the man and subjugation of the woman. In such a society women are expected to keep a low profile. They are not expected to talk or to laugh aloud. They are taught to be submissive, to suffer everything in silence and never to complain. Shyness is supposed to be a virtue in women, an ornament as the old proverb says. It is no business of woman to assume power, to command or surpass men according to the prevalent notions of the present society.

In all the novels Deshpande shows her women characters mostly careless and ill informed about the deeds of their husbands. Even though the women characters cannot escape the consequences of their husband's doings yet they choose to remain indifferent and ignorant. Like Sarita in *That Long Silence* they do not assert their right to know that. Often even in vital matters of survival like food and medical care they do not voice their needs or are rebuked for doing it; the consequences are fatal as in case of Mohan's sister in *That Long Silence*.

Female sexuality is not a taboo for Deshpande. Her freedom loving women characters are not restricted to one particular partner. Women characters like Indu, Madhu, Jaya leave the idea of living and loving one particular man. The myth of equality of sexes is questioned by Deshpande. She makes her women characters go beyond the social rules by not sticking to one partner. In a

way she is questioning this paradoxical society where men have the social sanction to develop extra marital affairs but women are treated as social outcastes for the same. Sex is deemed a sensitive matter and women have to remain passive or to pretend to be so as female sexuality shocks and annoys husbands. Jayant in *Roots and Shadows* is an instance to the point. Even though his wife, Indu was the one to take the unusual step of proposing, he is alarmed at the assertion of her sexuality. That compels her to hide her passion and pretend to be passive. Such experiences teach women not only to be ashamed of their natural sexuality, but also make them deceptive.

Such sensitivity also leads to ignorance of the majority of women about the means of birth control. Even when they need and desire to control their bodies they cannot do that because they cannot discuss with their husbands the best means suitable to them. Despite the government propaganda for family planning, the poor, illiterate women have to accept the age old view that pregnancies are God given and they have to submit to God's will. That is why Venu and Nayana in *That Long Silence* are frequently pregnant.

Mohan's mother takes the advice of a quack to terminate her last pregnancy and dies in that desperate attempt. That is the state of not a few even now in India.

Though Shashi Deshpande dislikes the idea of being termed a feminist, she has made a courageous attempt by breaking the 'long silence' of women

and making them voice their sufferings and frustrations. Her novels are a portrayal of the deplorable condition of the urban middle class women whose status and position in society has remained unchanged even in this 21st century. Modern education is leading the new generation to adopt birth control devices as people want to build their careers before having children. But here too, the will of the man prevails. Indu cannot have a child even though she desires one as Jayant does not deem it expedient now. This is the other extreme to which a section of our society has gone. For both health and happiness, the women must have knowledge and means of controlling their bodies and the choice to have babies or not must be theirs.

The condition of modern middle class women is far better than that of, say Mohan's mother or Venu or Nayana. They are educated, they can find a job and become financially independent and they can even marry the man of their choice. Moreover, they can and do control their bodies. But their married life is not devoid of problems. In fact, all the novels of Shashi Deshpande deal with these problems.

In *Roots and Shadows*, Indu faces several problems. First is the sexual one. Even though Indu was the person to propose and marry Jayant, the latter does not expect passion in her. She solves the problem by pretending to be passive. Second, though she wishes to have a baby, Jayant does not for purely financial reason. Third, she is dissatisfied with her job as a journalist because

she is compelled to pen things outrageous to her soul but Jayant as a man of the world does not entertain her idea to resign. The legacy left to her brings with it a fresh challenge: whether to use it for enriching herself and building her own career or distributing it among those who need and deserve it. Needless to say, she makes the best use of it.

In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita's husband develops a complex as she surpasses her in income and image and turns a sadist at night. First, she accepts it in silence deeming it as a self imposed punishment of some guilt committed by her in past. But later when she talks about it to her father, he advises her to talk to Manohar or consult some psychiatrist if necessary. That gives her courage to face the reality.

In *That Long Silence*, Jaya's husband falls into trouble due to some shady dealings she is not fully aware of. She spends some time in a sort of a hiding with her husband waiting for the dust to settle. That gives her time to reflect and realize that she has not done the right thing by remaining silent and unaware of what her husband has been doing at his job.

In *The Binding Vine*, the protagonist has no problems with her husband who spends most of his days abroad at sea. Her difficulty lies in people around her who oppose her social activity as she proceeds to help a victim of rape.

In *A Matter of Time*, Gopal leaves her wife Sumi suddenly for no apparent reason which places the responsibility of maintaining the family on Sumi. She along with her three young girl children faces the situation boldly after all their attempts to bring Gopal back fail.

In *Small Remedies*, Madhu, the mother of a boy in late teens, remembers all of a sudden the incident of a pre – marital sex she had when she was only fifteen and tells it to her husband. That embitters the couple's relationship as her husband does not take that easy. Her agony is aggravated when her only son dies. Under the circumstances, Madhu cannot but wait until time heals her wounds.

In *Moving On*, Rajani, a widow in her early forties is shouldering the responsibility of two grown up children, her own son and an adopted daughter. They are living elsewhere for their education and Madhu lives alone. Raja, a friend of hers, proposes to marry her for the sake of security and well being. The two children are not opposed to it but she refuses despite her strong passion as she thinks she can do without male protection and chooses to lead a free life.

Thus with the exception of the two, namely, *A Matter of Time* and *Moving On*, her novels are oriented toward reconciliation. Even in *The Dark Hold No Terrors*, reconciliation after open discussion of the problems between the couple is implied though the husband is a sadist. This is done by the suggestion that the husband is not the only person to blame. Commissions and

missions on part of both of the couple are responsible for the problems of married life and it is obligatory on part of both to sort out the same and seek an amicable solution.

That seems reasonable enough. But behind it lies the belief in the society of the present institution of marriage and family, which the novelist deems eternal and perfect one. Even though we find at one place in *Roots and Shadows* the family united only in “a readiness to reveal to others, to misunderstand, to see the worst”, (RS 60) the following seems to be the final judgement:

“The family....it’s all right to sneer at it. But tell me, what have you get to put in its place? What will you have in its stead? It gives us a background, an anchor, something to hold on to.” (RS104)

As a matter of fact, the present institutions of marriage and family are neither eternal nor perfect. As established by Lewis H. Morgan in *Ancient Society* (London, 1877) and reiterated by Fredrick Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), man – woman relations took different forms in different ages according to the social life of the time. They have taken their present form through a long process of evolution.

As for the perfection of the present institutions of marriage and family, Engels pointed out the characteristics stamped on them in consequence of

having arisen out of property relationships, namely, the dominance and indissolubility of marriage. He deems only the relations based on love and moral and pleads full freedom in marriage which

“can become generally operative only when the abolition of capitalist production, and the property relations created by it, have removed all those secondary economic considerations which still exert so powerful an influence on the choice of a partner. Then, no other motive remains than mutual affection.” (Marx and Engels 1977: 233-234)

Shashi Deshpande herself frequently compares the relationship of the married couple to two animals yoked together, which is significant and needs no elaboration. The Anand Bazar Patrika reported last year about 8 persons between the ages 65 to 85, all victims of their sons, had sought remedy from Calcutta High Court and Justice Dipankar Dutta ruled in their favour and ordered their sons to look after them properly. Such cases of the wealthy sons throwing away their parents on the street are not rare nowadays. We often read about them in the newspapers.

There is the other side of the coin. Not all parents are financially sound and mentally prepared enough to care and educate their children properly. If they are dead and helpless, the worst befalls their children. They are exploited and abused by their relations or thrown away on the street. The condition of the

younger and the weak is a bleak one. The Anand Bazar Patrika reported few days back about five female mental patients of Malda Sadar Hospital who were languishing there as their families did not take them back even after they were cured.

As Romila Thapar observed on the ancient Indian texts about the emergence of the state,

“its purpose was to protect the people as well as the institutions of family and private property and to maintain law and order”.

(Thapar 1973: 55)

So the myth of the eternity and perfection of the institution of family is inevitably connected with the myth of the eternity of private property and state too. In perpetuating the one, the novelist seeks to perpetuate the other.

The novelist does not conceal her support for the status quo. The words of her protagonist in *Roots and Shadows* are undoubtedly hers: “...it is not in me, the material of which revolutionaries are made. I no longer have any desire to mould people, to change them, to reform society.” (RS15) She interprets the epic story of Nahusa in the same vein. The story has been used through the ages to illustrate the consequence of pride, of losing control over one’s senses. But to the novelist it turns into a plea against revolution. According to the novelist, the

story tells us that “every revolution carries within it the seed of its own destruction. One oppression only replaces another.” (RS 214)

The very existence of a state at the border which has abolished capitalism is an eyesore to the upholders of the status quo. No wonder, her *Small Remedies* contains a subtle attack on the People’s Republic of China with a question about Tibet and with a suggestion that “the Chinese invasion” was the cause of Leela’s leaving the Communist Party for the Socialist Group. (SR 96)

The attack is even more pronounced in *That Long Silence*:

“I heard the cries of ‘Hindi-Chini bhai bhai’. But almost immediately came the war. We had been stabbed by our ‘brother’. Yes, that betrayal had been the watershed between hope and disillusionment. Things would never be the same again.” (TLS 59)

That is true enough in as much as the hostility will remain as long as the reactionaries do not succeed in restoring capitalism in China.

But all the hue and cry against China cannot belie the truth that emancipation of not only women but all the oppressed lies in socialist revolution.

As Engels wrote:

“With the passage of the means of production into common property, the individual family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry. The care and education of the children becomes a public matter. Society takes care of all children equally, irrespective of whether they are born in wedlock or not.” (Marx and Engels 1977: 249)

All that did not remain a distant dream when the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia.

“Six weeks after the revolution, civil marriage replaced the rule of the church, and before a year was out the marriage code was produced. This proclaimed full equality of husband and wife, and abolished the concept of illegitimacy by declaring complete equality of illegitimate with legitimate children. ...By invalidating the old code with its language of domination and submission, by allowing freedom in choosing which surname to use, and by forbidding spousal control over business, friends, correspondence and residence, in many ways gender equality was greatly advanced.” (Marik 2008: 419-420)

Abortion was legalized in 1920. Child care facilities, nurseries, kindergartens, communal dining halls and laundries were set up to remove the drudgery of women.

But the resources of a backward country like Russia were not adequate for the task ahead. All the progressive measures concerning gender and sexuality were heavily pushed back during 1928 and 1943. Motherhood was glorified and divorce laws were heavily tightened. Abortion became forbidden. The distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children was reestablished. Education in schools was gender segregated and different types of courses for boys and girls were planned and justified in the name of developing the proper masculine and feminine traits. (Schlsinger 1949: 364, 393-394) Thus the USSR had departed far from the path of Bolshevism long before capitalism was restored in 1991.

What is easily forgotten in this context is the fact that USSR as well as the countries of East Europe were (with the exception of East Germany) backward. There is no reason to hold that the same thing will occur again if the working class comes to power in an advanced country like USA, UK, Canada, Germany or Japan. It will undoubtedly end otherwise – by liberating women along with the other oppressed of the world. Problems of women like the problems of all the oppressed demand socialist revolution for their solution and therein lay the strength and hope for it.

Sarabjit Sandhu states

“Shashi Deshpande says that she knows how the women feel and she knows the mood of India. It has been observed that the predominating issues and themes in her novels emerge from the situations that focus on women caught in the crisis of a transitional society where the shift is taking place from conventional to unconventional. She traces out the tensions in which the Indian woman is caught in a transitional world.” [Sandhu 1991: 13-15].

Shashi Deshpande is an author who has a firsthand knowledge of Indian society and its deep laden problems. Modernity should not remain a myth for the weaker sections of the society. Therefore to get the bliss of this modernity, some changes are inevitably demanded. That demand is voiced through the characters of Deshpande’s novels. This thesis is an attempt to understand the issue from my point of view. However, there remains a scope for further research in the area. It is not after all an exhaustive study. It is, rather, a humble beginning in this sphere.

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THE DARK HOLDS TERRORS ALSO! AN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF INDIA AS REVEALED IN THE NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE

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Abstract

Shashi Deshpande's novels shed some light on a number of social problems. Extra marital sex, prostitution, rape (including the marital rape) and murder are the main ones. The novelist reveals the agonies of the victims and hints at the root of the problems and attitudes associated with them. Come Up and Be Dead sheds some light on prostitution, the oldest profession of the society. There may be several causes that lie at the root of it. But Shashi Deshpande plays up only the two of them namely, lasciviousness and revenge. If I Die Today illustrates the point that mentally deranged people and perverts commit murders sometimes and they are also committed to hide heinous crimes. So, it appears, going into the roots of derangement and perversion can prevent part of such crimes. The Binding Vine shows that rape (including marital rape) is an outcome of the male tendency to treat women as objects disregarding their human identity and personality. Social attitude favours the rapist by maligning the victim. As a result, the victim and her family tend to hide the crime, which allows the criminal to escape unpunished. The male generally initiates extra marital relations, which elicit response in some cases only. Bhaskar's fascination for Urmila in The Binding Vine shows that sometimes it is the smartness of the female that attracts the male. The case of Akka's husband in Roots and Shadows demonstrates that sometimes it is an excessive desire for sex. Boozie's relation with Sarita in The Dark Holds No Terrors proves that sometimes it is merely a pretension or façade. Indu's affair with Naren in Roots and Shadows shows it may be a woman's reaction to the irrational behaviour of the male.

It is hardly unexpected on the part of a society to have no problems. Human beings have faced problems since their very appearance on this planet. Primitive people had to reckon with the forces of nature, to learn their secrets, to make necessary adjustment with them for their survival. In course of time, they became able to harness them to some extent to make life comfortable. Even now, nobody can ignore nature. Human beings had to live in groups, organize into society to confront the challenge of nature. Social life laid the foundation of civilization which improved the quality of life turning the primitive food gatherers into food producers. However, it developed certain complications and tensions in human relations too which are discernible in very society as they manifest themselves in numerous social problems. So the strength of a society is judged not by the absence of social problems but by

the nature of response to them observed in it, which can be positive or negative. If it improves, strengthens and leads to the well-being of the society, the response is positive. But if that weakens the society by causing ill-will, discord and disorder, we cannot but call that negative. Bearing that in mind, we proceed to probe the problems we come across in Shashi Deshpande's novels and the response to the same found in the novels.

MURDER: We find cases of murder in two novels of Shashi Deshpande. In *If I Die Today* murders take place in a medical college hospital (S. D. College & Hospital) under mysterious circumstances. First, Guru, a cousin of Dr. Ashok, a cancer patient under treatment dies followed by Suman's wife. Then, Tony's dead body is found "floating in the tank near the temple". Suspicion in each case falls on people who had nothing to do with the crime. It is only after the murderous attack on Vijay in the dark of night that the true identity of the murderer comes to light. The criminal is none other than Dr. Vidya Agrawal, the sister of the Dean. In *Come Up and Be Dead*, six attempts at murder are made, three of which succeed. Sonali, Sharmila and Davayani are the victims who survive while Pratap Rao, Mrs. Jyoti Raman and Mridula do not. Mridula commits suicide but Pratap and Jyoti are killed by Sanjay who is involved as doer or accomplice in all the cases. But the last few pages of the novel reveal that Dr. Girish and Mr. Verma are the real villains of the piece. Dr. Vidya Agrawal, the murderer in *If I Die Today* is mentally deranged. Her excluded life and brother fixation have led her to that sad plight. She behaves unlike others in her profession because she is no better than "the insane animal of the night". The murders committed by her are senseless, not a product of cold calculation. The murder in *Come Up and Be Dead* are, on the contrary, deliberate and planned. Sanjay kills Pratap and Mrs. Raman because they knew about his call girl racket and attempts to kill Sonali as he suspects she has told her mother something about it. He tries to kill her cousin Sharmila who is also her mistress too as she hinders him from killing Sonali. Dr. Girish becomes involved in the call girl trade because he is ever in need of ample money for his demanding, smart and spendthrift wife. He masterminds all the attempts to murder to hide his role in the racket. The "sorrowful widower" Mr. Verma runs the call girl racket at Hotel Open Sesame for entirely different reason. Deserted by his wife, he feels humiliated and carries "a canker of hatred for young women within him." In a strange revengefulness, he treats innocent girls into the morass of immorality. He maintains his show of respectability by silencing people by bribing them or getting them killed. Francis Bacon's observation holds good in his case: "Vindictive Persons live the life of witches, who, as they are Mischievous, so end they unfortunate." Miss Havisham in Charles Dicken's *Great Expectations* resembles him to some extent. As Compeyson had disappointed her by not turning up to marry her on the appointed day, she makes Estella disappoint Pip in like manner. However, Verma has surpassed Miss Havisham in diabolic activity. If the misdeeds described in the two novels seem incredible, creations of wild imagination far removed from reality, we can recall several cases before 1982 to dispel doubts. Rama Raghav had terrorized street— dwellers of Mumbai in 1968, killing people indiscriminately by night as they slept in open air. Judged to be suffering from incurable schizophrenia, he was sentenced to life imprisonment. Charles Shobhraj, an urbane and

cultivated man, murdered tourists in South Asia in 1970s. An auto-rickshaw driver Shankar murdered nine teenage girls in Chennai over six months in 1988 and claimed to have done that under the spell of cinema. He was executed in 1995. Toward the end of 2006, Moninder Singh Pandher of Nithari settlement in Noida became notorious after more than 38 people were reported to have disappeared. By the middle of January 2007, the remains of about 17 poor, young women and juveniles were found in the drain near his house. The position of the criminals and the vulnerability of citizens as depicted in the two novels raises questions about dealing with such criminals and saving the lives of their unaware targets. Neither pathology nor psychiatry has any means to date to detect and mark out psychopaths. Society is even more helpless with doctors like Vidya Agrawal. A doctor in the United States of America was detected after killing 34 patients under his care while the other after killing 54. Another in Australia became known as Dr. Death after eliminating 84. Such formidable persons can be punished when detected but nothing can be done before that. Public opinion differs and varies according to circumstances. Srilanka decided to revive death penalty after the murder of Solomon Bandarnaike. People in India supported the execution of the rapist Dhananjay Chatterjee vehemently and are likely to welcome a similar punishment in case of sadists like Moninder Sing. Shashi Deshpande sticks to the view that law should take its course and the wicked must be punished. That is what happens to the wrongdoers in both of the novels. *If I Die Today* reveals the helplessness of the patients when the doctor is a psychopath. But even then, detention and prevention would become easy if human life was deemed sacred and not a single death was dismissed lightly. *Come Up and Be Dead* shows the human weaknesses that contribute to the disaster to a large extent. Lasciviousness, fear, greed and lavishness seem to be the main factors responsible for the tragedy. Sharmila and Mridula fall in the trap of Sanjay because of lasciviousness. Then, here are other girls who spend lavishly to maintain a high standard of living in order to appear 'modern'. Being ever in need of money, they fall in the trap of criminals easily. So young women can save their lives by overcoming such weakness to a large extent. That seems to be the view of Shashi Deshpande as suggested by the two novels.

Murder is a crime punished by law in every civilised society. It is committed due to a number of reasons. Some of the reasons are disclosed in the novels discussed above. Psychopaths like Vidya Agrawal need no motive for murders. Mr. Verma and Dr. Girish have a hatred for woman that makes them masterminds of murders. Both of them share fear of detection with Sanjay which precipitates attempts to murder. Besides the reasons found in the novels, there are other reasons too as seen every now and then, greed, religious frenzy, political hostility, and sheer rage are the common ones. Superstition is the cause of murders in some cases. Human sacrifice to please some deity or evil spirit, burning widows, lynching the so-called witches is the cases to the point. Though banned by law, such practices are not totally unheard of.

Generally people denounce a murderer and wish to see him punished. That is particularly true, if the crime is committed to rob money, to hide attempted rape, or the victim is a tender-age one. If the murder is not intentional and planned, law treats it not harshly. Capital punishment, that is, death by hanging, beheading, electric chair or lethal injection has been

the officially approved method of punishing murderers. The form varies in different countries and in various ages. The more severe the punishment, the happier felt people in the past. That attitude led to the invention of several crude methods of killing the offender, e.g., throwing him to the dogs, getting him crushed under the feet of an elephant, burning him alive etc. Capital punishment was carried out in the open before cheering spectators during the medieval age. But the progress of civilization has changed the taste and temperament of people. A humane treatment of even criminal in now demanded. People are no longer eager to watch and applaud and therefore, executions are now carried out in person of few witnesses absolutely required by law. Moreover, organizations like Amnesty International are agitating for total repeal of capital punishment. Several countries in the world have abolished capital punishment in response to such demands. There are arguments for and against the abolition and it is not possible to discuss them here. Suffice it to say that there is a strong case for the demand in countries where most of the recipients of death penalty are the ethnic or religious minority (e.g., the blacks in the U.S.A., the Basques in Spain, the Kurds and the Jews in Arab countries etc.)

RAPE: *The Binding Vine* brings to the limelight the problem of rape. Kalpana is the victim in the novel. The rapist in the case is her maternal aunt's husband, Prabhakar. The man had set her eyes on Kalpana. Though her mother and maternal aunt acquiesced, Kalpana spurned his advances. Then Prabhakar, a man about her father's age raped her. Her mother, Shakuntala (Shakutai) becomes a willing partner of the design to pass the case as a car accident. Her motive for the strange behavior is revealed in the following words:

"If a girl's honour is lost, what is left? The girl doesn't have to do anything wrong..... people will themselves point a finger at her..... Even if it is true, keep it to yourself; don't let anyone know of it. I have another daughter, what will become of her?"

That is, society blames the victim instead of the rapist for the crime. Prospect of marriage of girls and boys in the family are jeopardized for no fault of theirs. The police, entrusted with the task of enforcing laws, go to a great length to help the rapists. The following extract lays bare their attitude succinctly:

"The police officer argued with him (Dr. Bhaskar) why makes it a case of rape? he asked. She's going to die anyway, so what difference does it make.....? We don't like rape cases, the man said. They are messy and troublesome, never straightforward. But forget that and think of the girl and her family. Do you think it'll do them any good to have it known that the girl was raped?"

If that logic seems to have concern for the victim and her family, the deceitful appearance is belied by the following addition:

"For all you know she may be a professional, we see a lot of that. But if you ask me.....She must have been out with a boy friend— girls of that class always have boy friends the families know nothing about it. May be after they had a bit of fun she was knocked down by a car."

The words “that class” are quite significant here as they expose the class bias of the police officer. As the doctor refers to the marks of fingers on Kalpana’s arms, huge contusions on her thighs and teeth marks on her lips, he gives in but adds:

“Okay....She was raped. But publicizing it isn’t going to do any one any good. It’s going to mean trouble for everyone— the girl, her family, your colleague who first examined her, us.”

Thus, the police are neither sympathetic nor helpful to the rape victims of the working class. It is sad that the victim’s family become unwittingly their tool.

Events take a sudden turn when the hospital authorities decide to transfer Kalpana to some suburban hospital as she does not recover her consciousness even after four months. The ground for the decision is the paucity of beds in the hospital. Urmi persuades Shakutai to publicise the case and gets it done with the help of her journalist friend Malcom. The television coverage follows the press reports soon. That arouses hot discussions in the media which is not entirely sympathetic. A section of men sticks to the opinion that “rape happens because women go about exposing themselves”— an opinion also shared by the misinformed, backward section of women like Shakutai. To that Radha, the fiancée of Urmi’s brother Amrut, retorts : “I think men’s minds are like public lavatories— full of dirty pictures.” However, publicity wins support and sympathy. Women mobilise to protest against the atrocity, there are questions and uproar in the assembly and the decision to transfer is withdrawn.

As soon as the case is reopened, it comes to light that the rapist is no other than Prabhakar the husband of Kalpana’s mother’s sister, Sulu. The discovery shocks Sulu rudely and she immolates herself. The story highlights two things. First, the rapist need not be a stranger all the time. He may be even a relation and in that case young women are extremely vulnerable. In *Roots and Shadows* Indu at 15 had felt Vasant Kaka’s ‘helping hands’ giving her ‘the age—old messages of male to female’ and panicked. She was lucky enough to save herself. Secondly, it shows that hiding the truth does not help the victim and her family, but the victimizer.

Marital rape, but the other form of rape, received Shashi Deshpande’s concern in her short story, ‘*The Intrusion*’. It recorded the horror of a newly married woman whose crass and insensitive husband violated her body exercising his conjugal rights. The theme acquires greater dimensions in three of her novels.

There are two cases of marital rape in *The Binding Vine*. The less noticed one is that of Shakutai. Her marriage was ‘the greatest misfortune’ of her life. Almost a year after her marriage, she discovered that her husband had neither a permanent job, nor he cared for that. He shared a room in the police chowk with his cousin, a policeman in Bombay. Here he joined them as “a free servant’ and had to sleep with her husband in the common passage outside their room. It was there she conceived and her daughter Kalpana was born. The circumstances are best narrated by her in conversation with Urmi :

‘I, a woman, had to sleep there, in public with strange men walking up and down. But my husband’— the voice dropped low’ ‘you know what men are, he wanted to..... We’re not animals I told him. As if he cared. And I got pregnant’. Besides the considerations of absence of privacy and decency, there was a material ground for unwillingness on her part.

Her husband held temporary jobs now and then and liked idling for months after that. So she wanted to earn some money and had just started working at a grocer's shop. The unwanted pregnancy jeopardized her design and made life even more miserable for her. She had to endure the outrage as nobody but Urmi would lend a sympathetic ear to her.

The more noticed and better discussed in the same novel is the marital rape of Mira that gave birth to Kishor. Mira was a talented girl at college who wrote poems in Kannada and Expressed herself in English too. She had to give up her studies as a stranger became obsessed of her, contacted her parents through a common friend and married her at 18. She died at 22 giving birth to her son Kishor. Her diaries in English and poems in Kannada survived to tell how painful married life was to her.

Roots and Shadows tells another tale of marital rape :Akka “was just twelve when she get married. And he was well past thirty....He was at all bulky man with large coarse features. And she...was small and dainty, really pretty, with her round face, fair skin, straight nose and curly hair. Six months after her marriage, she “grew up” and went to her husband’s home. What she had to endure there, nobody knows. She never told anyone.....But I heard that twice she tried to run away.....a girl of thirteen. Her mother-in-law I heard, whipped her for that and locked her up for three days. Starved her as well. And then, sent her back to her husband’s room. The child, they said, cried and clung to her mother-in-law saying, “Lock me up again, lock me up.” But there was no escape.....”. Such experiences have left a lasting impression on Akka. That is why she tells the recounter of the tale to Atya before the consummation of her marriage: ‘Now your punishment begins, Narmada, you have to pay up for all those saris and jewels’. Manohar and Sarita in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* have married intercaste for love. Theirs is not an arranged marriage. Sarita had gone to the extent of severing her ties with parents for the sake of love. All goes well until a girl comes home to interview Sarita for a magazine and asks Manohar unwittingly, “How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well.” That hurts the ego of Manohar who is a lecturer in a third rate college while his wife is a renowned doctor. Manohar gives vent to his feelings that night by attacking Sarita like a wild animal. On another occasion, he feels insulted when a colleague says that he cannot afford an expensive vacation and his wife adds that he could have done that had he married a doctor. Sadistic attacks are repeated thereafter but Sarita dares not do anything to stop them. It is toward the end of the novel that she gathers courage and determination to do that.

Rape is a widespread phenomenon. One woman in five in the world is likely to be a victim of rape or attempted rape in her life. According to WHO figures, United Kingdom recorded 1200 cases of rape in 2001 and the British Crime Survey in 2001 estimated that just 15 per cent of the cases came to the attention of police. A report published in ‘The Independent’ had the following to tell about the attitude of the enlightened people of that country toward the rape victims : “One in three people in Britain believe a woman is partially or completely to blame for being raped if she has behaved in a flirtatious manner or is drunk, according to the research. More than a quarter also believe a woman is at least partially responsible for being raped if she wears a sexy or revealing clothing, a survey of 1095 British adults found.” With such attitude of the public, the performance of the courts was predictable. Only one in 19 was

likely to be convicted. *The Economist* observed: “at the moment, victim’s prospects are poor. Frequently disbelieved, disregarded and humiliated in court, they often fear they have been assaulted twice.”

In developing countries like India, the condition can be no better. A rape occurs in India every 40 minutes. Rape figures during the period 1987—1991 rose from 7767 to 9738, an increase of 26.1%. On an average 37 rapes are committed everyday. In 95% of the cases, the accused are acquitted for one reason or other. The lot of the poor is worst. About one hundred cases of rape were reported every year in the nineteen-eighties in which the victims belonged to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes while the victimizers were mostly security forces. In the village Tirundli in Kerala three hundred unmarried girls, raped by non-tribal, had become mothers.

Rape is not only delinquent, unorganised, individual violence against female. It is often an instrument of oppression and domination against the poor, the dominated class and people. Rapes committed by Pakistan army in Bangladesh in 1971 were designed as a punishment for the aspiration of freedom. The Japanese had committed similar atrocities during the World War II in the countries overrun by them. The ‘Jehadis’ in Jammu & Kashmir are repeating the same since 1989. Even during peace, rape is practised to maintain domination and quell protest. Gang rape of twenty women in Pararia village in Bihar in 1988 shown in the documentary film “Rape as Assertion of Power” directed by Saagari Chhabra is an instance to the point. As the village was the first to be submerged under water due to a major dam project the villagers were demanding adequate compensation for their land. The gang rape was organised to suppress the agitation.

Society, administration and judiciary are hardly helpful to the victims. Society blames the victim, not the victimiser. The police and administration side with the rich, the powerful and people with political identity. Several cases to rape, committed by relations were reported during the last decade. Criminals in almost all of them remain punished. People in West Bengal still remember the dignitary who called the victims of rape in Birati an immoral lot. No wonder then that the women of lower classes are believed to be devoid of character by people who matter and charges of molestation and rape brought in by them are dismissed lightly. Often, they are alleged to be lying to extort some money and the excuse suffices to set at liberty the rich and powerful rapists.

A law promulgated in september, 1989 sought to protect the vulnerable section but rape by the police and para-military forces remains wide spreaded particularly in Manipur. More than twelve years have passed since Justice A. S. Anand and Justice Sagir Ahmad observed the following but reality remains unchanged to date :

“A rapist not only violates the privacy and personal integrity, but mentally causes serious psychological as well as physical harm in the process” (Punjab vs. Gurmeet Singh, 1996). In the same case, Supreme Court further asked the trial court to bear in mind that their observations have wider impact on society. It held that even if the victim had a permissive life, no reference to the victim as being a girl of loose moral character was permissible. It added that even promiscuous women had the right to refuse to submit herself to anyone.

Marital rape, the other kind of rape, is less reported as it is held to be the private matter of married couple. Both religion and tradition permit the husband license and total control over the person of wife. Many people deem it inappropriate to call it 'rape' for the same reason. Sociologists nowadays, however, admit its reality. Marital rape has been common in India since long as it was decided at a certain point of time that girls ought to be married before they attained puberty to people much older. Even when the age-gap is not wide, the consent of wife matters for the sake of harmonious relationship.

A well-known case of marital rape described by the victim herself is found in Abida Sultaan's *Memoir of A Rebel Princess*. Born in the royal house of Bhopal she was the mother of the Pakistan diplomat, Shaharyar Khan and aunt to cricketer M. A. K. Pataudi. Though she had to memorise the Koran in childhood, she grew up sports-mad in a rebelliously masculine mould, played polo and hockey and became an aviator and All-India Women's Squash Champion. Her horror began with her marriage to the Nawab of Kuwait. As she puts it: "I entered the world to conjugal trauma.....My revulsion for married sex produced an equally frustrating and damning reaction from my husband." That brief union led to the birth of Shaharyar. She briskly settled the matter of the child custody by driving late one night to her husband's estate, whipping out a revolver and threatening to shot him or herself. The nawab sensibly remarried and the two remained great friends. Abida died in Karachi in April 2002.

Ayesha Khatun (18), the daughter of a tailor was not that fortunate. Married on 25 April, 2004 her married life lasted not more than a day. Her husband Mohammad Afros gave her milk laced with sedatives on the wedding night and physically abused her. She bore several injuries and had to be operated upon twice to stop profuse bleeding. Her husband turned down her pleas to take her to a doctor. It was her father who came to her rescue. When she tried to lodge a complain, Nanglor Police Station refused to record it on technical ground while Kanjhawala Police Station told her such things were normal between husband and wife. Finally at the intervention of an NGO, 'Crime Against Women' police station at Kirti Nagar registered it on June 14, 2004 but diluted it to a dowry case. Though she wanted divorce and punishment to the rapist, her in-laws were adamant and wanted her back. Such is the sad plight of the women who are not as strong as Abida.

Even more helpless is the rape victim when the rapist is someone in the family or a relation. Attempts are made to malign, hush up and dismiss the charges. Few victims get justice. Muslim women are particularly vulnerable as the case of Imarana shows. Ali Muhammad, resident of Charthawal in the district of Muzaffarnagar in U. P. raped his daughter-in-law Imrana on June 14, 2005. Not only the village panchayat but even Darul-Uloom of Deoband declared the marriage dissolved as a consequence. More bizarre, they asked her to accept Noor Mohammad (her husband) as her "Son" and spend seven months in isolation to purify herself to qualify as the father-in-laws wife. All India Muslim Personal Law Board concurred with them. Only the All India Muslim Women's Personal Law Board struck a note of discord. Its president Shaista Ambar Warned : " This decision will be misused by Muslim Society to get rid of unwanted woman. Anyone who lusts after his daughter-in-law would rape her and then take her as his wife." She was right. Several cases of the type have been reported from different part of India since then, Religion is supposed to be a guardian of

morality. But the interpreters of religion seem to be zealous in favoring and rewarding rapists for a misdeed which is ignoble from the point of view of ethics and punishable under law.

SUICIDE: There are three instances of suicide in Shashi Deshpande's novels. Sulutai in *The Binding Vine* commits suicide. Her husband, Prabhakar, has raped Kalpana and the latter is lying unconscious since then. Having learned her husband's misdeed, she asked her sister what to do. As she is angry, Sulu goes back home, gives breakfast to her husband and commits suicide. Then, Kusum ends her life in *That Long Silence*. A mentally sick mother of three daughters, she is avoided by her family and relations. She lives with a distant but kind and sympathetic relation, Jaya. Eventually she insists on going to her family and jumps there in a dry well and dies of broken neck. The novelist offers an explanation of the tragedy : "May be her fate was sealed when she was born to those feckless, hopeless parents of hers. A father who cared for nothing but smoking and movies, who never worked a day in his life; a mother whose world centred round her youngest, the baby on her lap, while the rest of her kids ran around in wild abandon, unkempt, dirty, unfed". There in another case of suicide in *Small Remedies*, that of a painter. The young man goes to the house of a friend who is seriously ill to console his daughter of fifteen. Eventually he has sexual encounter with her. Perhaps that is the reason of his suicide in young age. The painter is distantly related to that girl, Madhu being the son of a widow who had become the mistress of the father of Leela, Madhu's aunt. It is quite likely, he feels remorseful after his sudden, impulsive deed and finding no way to expiate his sin, he cuts short his life. His mother's conduct may have contributed to his uneasiness to some extent.

Suicide is an option a person chooses rarely and only in despair, generally speaking, everybody strives to live and stakes a lot for the purpose. Bankruptcy, disgrace, disappointment in love, prolonged illness with little hope of recovery, possibility of detection and punishment for grave offenses are some of the main factors leading to such a mishaps. Young boys and girls take recourse to suicide when their parents expect too much from them and they find themselves incapable of realising their dreams. Mental worries lead older people to suicide sometimes. However if the instances of Sulutai, Kusum and the painter have any significance, the message is clear. There ought to be no communication gap in the family and no tensions. Parents are expected to be responsible, considerate and sympathetic to their children and husbands must care for their wives. Those who shirk from their duty spoil of the lives of their near ones and bear the responsibility for suicides.

DOWRY: We find a reference to dowry in *Roots and Shadows*. Akka has settled the marriage of her grand daughter, Padmini (generally called Mini) with a boy who has simply passed S. S. C. Despite his coarse features, inadequate education and unemployment, he is deemed a suitable match for Mini. An amount of ten thousand rupees is paid as dowry to him and also all the wedding expenses. Mini herself deems that a good deal as she is neither educated nor beautiful. She accepts the arrangement gracefully as there seems to be no option before her. "What choice do I have, Indu?" she says. She is past twenty-four and she has to marry, so she thinks any man will do. Sumitra who objects to dowry in case of Mini, was

herself keen on getting her daughter Lata married in a prosperous business family but the negotiations failed simply because Akka refused to pay the dowry. This shows that not all people who talk a lot against dowry are not necessarily principled; some of them do not practise what they preach.

That is not unexpected as dowry is an old disease of Indian society and still quite in vogue. Born in Hindu society, it is affecting other religious communities too. Despite the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1986, the number of dowry deaths increased from 1912 in 1987 to 5154 in 1991 and cases of cruelty by the husband and his relations increased from 11603 in 1989 to 15941 in 1991. According to the National crimes Bureau 6995 dowry deaths were reported in the year 2000. Among the mega cities, the share of Delhi was as high as 19.9 percent. Apart from the dowry deaths, 45778 incidents of torture by husbands or in-laws were reported. Though that number dropped by 28 percents across the country, Madurai reported an increase of 195.9 percent and Hyderabad, 200 percent. The culprits, mostly resourceful and educated, are rarely punished if even arrested. The practice of wife-beating remains though it varies from region to region and class to class. However, such cases are seldom reported to the police.

EMPLOYMENT AND RESERVATION: In *Roots and Shadows*, Krishna, the son of Sunanda fails twice in his SSC and she claims it was done deliberately as the candidate was a Brahmin. The novelist does not agree with such attitude: Indu expresses her views clearly in the novel: “I had been hearing of this bogeyman ‘they’ since my return. ‘They’ refused us jobs; ‘they’ refused us promotions; and now they are failing us in our exams. ‘They’ had become the scapegoats for our failures, our weakness, our faults, injustice.” Again, “...it is the weak, the incompetent, the undeserving who sit and moan. There are others who effortlessly scale the walls of injustice, who overcome barriers by ignoring them.” She cites the case of Vithal who was marching ahead against all odds bravely.

The other thing pointed out in the same novel is that people fail mostly because they aspire beyond their abilities and aptitude. Sunil, the son of Madhav, a third class B.Sc., wants to do Business Management. Naturally he finds himself in a private institute “where you pay so much money and at the end of the year they give you a diploma that’s not worth the paper its printed on” Similarly, Sharad with a third class wants to become a doctor or simply because of prestige and money associated with it. Indu saves the situation for him and he prospers in hotel business.

The real problem according to the novelist is that some careers are deemed traditionally respectable (law, teaching, government office jobs etc.). But all people are not suitable for such jobs. That is the source of trouble in many cases. People vary in skills, abilities, attitudes etc. and it is not sensible to ignore individual variations.

‘They’ refuse us jobs- that line in *Roots and Shadows* points to a problem that occupies not an insignificant place in our national life. Reservation comes like a boon or bane to the job-seekers depending on circumstances. India since 1950 has witnessed the ever-expanding phenomenon of reservation. Initially the constitution of India provided certain concession to the depressed sections of society called Scheduled Casts and Scheduled Tribes. Some seats in

the parliament and state assemblies were set apart for them which others could not contest. There was similar provision in respect of government services. Then government aided or sponsored institutions were brought under the provisions of reservation too. Next the principle of reservation was applied to the admission to the institutions on of higher education, medical colleges, engineering colleges etc. Finally a new category called Other Backward Casts (OBC) was added to the list of beneficiaries. Now, the politicians are planning to extend the benefit of reservation to religious minorities. As propriety of such extensions is often challenged the Supreme Court has set a limit- not more than 50 per cent of the jobs can be now reserved.

As more and more people feel threatened, they react in numerous ways. Initially, the protests were sporadic, though not always mild going to the point of self-immolation sometimes. Now, with the appearance of bodies like SACK (Students Against Corruptions and Kickbacks) and YE (Youth for Equality), now it has got an organized form. Though the protests remain ignored and ineffective so far, it does not mean they are meaningless.

Judging from the results as seen during the last 57 years, the policy of reservation has failed to benefit those it was designed for. This is because all the poor and backward do not necessarily belong to S.C., S.T. or OBC. As Abhiroop Lahiri put it : “there are just as many impoverished Mukherjees, Banerjees and Lahiries as the OBCs amongst our hungry millions.”

A study in 1997 indicates only six per cent of the Dalit families benefit from the government policy. In the country as a whole, members of the SC and ST combined did not receive even three per cent of the degrees in medicine or engineering, though together they did add up to merely one-fourth of the population noted a study by Sowell in 2004. Quotas for SC in schools and government services remain largely unfulfilled. Reservations serve as the mask to hide the poverty that prevents people to get requisite qualifications for the jobs. It seems more sensible to open the jobs to qualified claimants available rather than leaving the vacancies unfulfilled.

Then, the policy has benefited some of the beneficiaries more at the expense of others and raised the demand for “quotas within quotas,” Thus, though the Chamars constituted but 17 per cent of the population of Maharashtra, they got 35 per cent of the medical students. In Haryana they got 80 per cent of the scholarships at under graduate level and 65 per cent at the graduate level while 18 of the 37 SC groups got no scholarships at all. In Bihar with 12 SC groups in the state, merely two groups accounted for the 61 per cent in colleges and the Chamars were one of them.

Moreover, while quotas for OBCs are generally filled to capacity, more and more castes are being added to that category. It is a moot question if they are really backward. The Yadavas in the North and the Lingayats in the South, for example, are economically powerful enough. In Bihar, the OBC industrialists have investments worth 9.99 crore and immovable property worth 19.99 lakh. Figures about the land ownership too given below lead to a similar conclusion :

Land	Owned by the S.C.	Owned by ST	Owned by OBC
Rural	9%	11.2%	43.5%
Urban	4.8%	3.3%	36.8%

Dr. Abu Saleh Sharif, the well-known economist who put together the formidable data and wrote the Sachar Committee Report had the following to say about the policy of reservations: “Reservations for what? Reservation for whom? Reservation for Muslims will benefit only the rich. How do you empower the poor? The answer does not lie in giving them one IAS job or one I.I.T. admission. How do you make a lot of students continue school? How do you make a lot of girl complete matriculation? Learn skill in technology institution? That should be the mission to push Muslims up.” What Dr. Sharif says about Muslims in no less applicable to others. Dr. Sharif is right in observing: “This debate about reservation is nothing more than politics.”

In order to help economically deprived sections of the society, education must be in the real sense of the term at every stage. The state should bear all the expenses. The teacher and student ratio must be improved and brought to the level of countries like Japan and education must be compulsory and residential. That will prepare the learners to earn their seats in the institutes of higher learning automatically and get the jobs they deserve without difficulty. Thus the tensions and resentments in the society as well as corruption and deterioration of standard will disappear.

What is often forgotten by vote-seekers is the fact that compromise in respect of quality is highly undesirable in case of admission to the institutions of higher learning. Moreover, there are certain jobs where just any person will not do as the merit matters. Jobs of teachers, doctors and engineers are instance to the point. Needless to say, society needs meritorious people for such jobs not persons born in certain castes.

As a matter of fact, the very idea of reservation is a legacy of the British. Lord Curzon initiating the policy in 1905 by banning jobs for Bengali Hindus. Later preferential treatment to Muslims and Sikhs was introduced as a part of the policy of ‘divide and rule’. During the period 1909-1919 reservations for Muslims became well established. In 1935, job reservation for the backward castes was introduced for political reasons. What we have seen since the British left, is more and more extension of the same. The British hoped to perpetuate their rule by dividing people along caste and religious lines. Their successors hope to save capitalism with the same method. Shashi Deshpande’s treatment of the problem of reservation in *Roots and Shadows* as shown above is defensive. She believes that as the forefathers of the higher castes have sinned in the past, so the present generation must atone for it. That reminds me of the logic of Hindu communalists who demand atonement from the Muslim for the sins (real or imagined) committed by Muslim rulers centuries ago. Such settling account with the past is hardly a rational approach.

PROSTITUTION: Shashi Deshpande pays some attention to the problem of prostitution in one of her novels. In *Come Up and Be Dead* call girl business, a form of prostitution goes on in a hotel called ‘Open Sesame’. The girls who enter in the business are not the victims of

misery, forced by circumstances. Rather, they choose it of their own accord. The novelist seems to share the views of the police officer Prasad who maintains: “And yet, the truth is that all of us carry this potentiality for evil within us. We have to struggle against it all over lives.”

The potentiality leads both men and women to immoral acts. Sanjay represents the male and Sharmila the female in the novel. Lasciviousness causes Sharmila to enter into an incestuous relationship with her cousin Sanjay at the age of fourteen and reduces herself to a tool of his design. She helps him trap school-girls to become call girls. If one tries to find out the reason of their falling into the trap, lasciviousness will be held responsible for their conduct too.

The foolish notions of those girls about sex provide the other explanation. A section of girls thinks that physical relation is “just a bit of fun.” They are eager to become modern and believe that having boy-friends and lovers makes a girl smart and modern. Mridula is an instance to the point. As Sonali remarks:

“She was a crazy girl, all right. She was dying to get into the mod crowd and have boy-friends and go running all over town, doing nothing but being silly.”

Prostitution is the oldest profession in the world, they say. It has assumed various forms in different countries at different times. Once the profession had assumed such importance; influence and wealth that the need of a manual for the prostitutes was felt. The prostitutes of Pataliputra asked Dattak to prepare one for them. Dattak complied with the request. His work is lost now but Vatsyayanas *Kamasutra* incorporates the essentials of that work in the sixth book. Written to serve as a trade guide, the book discusses how prostitutes can train their new hand, gain clients and keep them, extract more and more money from them. Later Damodar Gupta wrote *Kuttanimatam* and Kshendra, *Samay Matrika* exposing the tricks of prostitutes and their mistress to save the simpletons. Short stories and novels in several languages have appeared during the last two centuries. Mirza Hadi Ruswa’s *Umrao Jan Ada* in Urdu, Premchand’s *Sevasadan* in Hindi and Alexander Kuprin’s *Yama* deserve mention in this connection. These works approach the profession from a different angle aiming to find out the social roots of the profession, if not to point to a way out.

So far as the treatment of Shashi Deshpande is concerned, it seems partial and conservative. To isolate the problem of prostitution from socio-economic roots and compulsions and to lay the blame at the door of inherent human potentiality is dangerous too. If the root of evil lies in socio-economic conditions, people can strive to change those conditions and abolish prostitution. If human nature is at fault, all hope for change disappears.

EXTRA- MARITAL RELATIONS: Indu’s relationship with Naren in *Roots and Shadows* ends suddenly with the death of the latter. Naren is the grandson of the grandson of the old Father, a man unrelated to her who had become almost a member of her parental home under the same roof. So she is familiar with Naren from her early life. However, her sexual relation with Naren grows and culminates when she comes back to her parental home several years after her marriage on the eve of Akka’s death and stays there to attend Mini’s marriage. Vatsyayana counted friendship since early life as one of the factors that lead to extra-marital relations. Naren fulfills that condition.

The other factor that deserves attention is her dissatisfaction in married life. As she says, “I wish I could say we have achieved complete happiness. But I cannot fantasise,... Neither love nor happiness come to us for the asking. But they can sneak up on us when we least expect them.” She loves Jayant too much, too passionately but instead of feeling happy about it, she is ashamed of it. The explanation of the strange phenomenon lies in the traditional mindset of Jayant which does not admit of female sexuality. It was far from sober and decent on the part of a woman to be passionate, to take initiative in his view. So “it shocks him to find passion in a woman. It puts him off.” So, Indu is compelled to take recourse to deception, to pretend to be passive and unresponsive.

Naren, on the other hand, has a better understanding of female psychology. He is aware of the elementary truth that for both men and women sexuality is natural, that there is nothing abnormal in being passionate for either of them. He realizes that Indu expects something from Jayant which he is unable to give her. Indu is pleased to find she need not to pretend with Naren. So love and happiness sneak up unexpectedly as described in Indu’s own words : “An ecstasy filled my body and I could not be still any more. There was a joyous sense of release of passion I could experience and show and participate in. I clung to him convulsively, marvelling that I did not have to hold myself back.”

This relationship ends abruptly as Naren is drowned and Indu returns to her husband determined to build her home on honesty. However, she is not going to tell Jayant about her relationship with Naren. “For that was not important. That had nothing to do with the two of us and our life together.” If that sounds hypocritical, Jayant alone is to blame for it. Indu’s marriage with Jayant has taught her to reveal nothing but he wants to see, to say to him nothing but what he wants to hear.

This relationship is interpreted differently by critics and opinions vary about its significance. Some think Indu realizes her fault in the extra-marital relationship with Naren while others disagree. Thus Anita Singh believes that Indu “suffers no guilt in her extra-marital relationship with Naren. Rammoothy remarks: “This sheds a brilliant light on Indu’s awareness of her autonomy and her realization, that she is a being, and not a dependent on Jayant.”

Parvati Bhatnagar, on the other hand, takes Indu to task for her conduct: “Indu’s casual and matter of fact attitude to what she had done is shocking. Have our morals really gone so low that women commit this sin for nothing, just to prove that they do not lack courage? Is this really representative of Indian women?” Sunita Reddy holds a view diametrically opposed to it. Indu in her opinion “refuses to be consumed by guilt after committing adultery. She in fact revels in the act with wild abandon and deliberately savours the memory of it, refusing to wipe it out of her mind.” Referring to the adverse criticism of P. Bhatnagar, she retorts: “Perhaps this is Deshpande’s answer to the double standards practised by our society where only men are allowed to take sexual liberties.”

Much has been written and is likely to be written in the same fashion. So, it is better to conclude with three observations. First, Indu’s affair with Naren is incidental and does not affect her marital relation. Indu is well aware of the fact that Naren “could never be anyone’s beloved or husband” as she puts it before Mini. Her love for Jayant whom she married much

against the wishes of her family, is deep and lasting. Second the novelist seems to believe that repressed libido distorts and weakens the personality of a person while sexual gratification strengthens it. Indu's sexual encounter with Naren contributes to her strength and enables her to resolve her problem. Thus it has been introduced in the novel to bear out Freud. Third, modern literature unlike the ancient is not didactic. It does not aim at presenting models of virtuous men and women before readers. It tends to be realistic and therefore, its characters are far from perfect. They are ordinary mortals striving to solve their problems, seeking happiness and fulfillment, trying to learn through trial and error. So the sexual encounter deserves to be seen as a warning to insensitive husbands who fail to recognize female sexuality and tend to ignore it.

Sarita's relationship with Boozie is also extra-marital at least in appearance, though critics have paid little attention to that for obvious reasons. Boozie is one of her teachers at the medical college. She comes into close contact with him while doing her first house post. Boozie is a good surgeon and good teacher. He teaches not only Pediatrics but also how to speak good English with proper accent, how to dress elegantly and simply, how to enjoy good food, how to read and what etc. Her husband having belied her expectations, she finds it difficult to live a respectable life due to financial difficulties. The door to prosperity does not open for her even after completing M. B. B. S. Boozie comes to her rescue at that stage. He gives her work in a research scheme that brings some badly needed extra money every month. Then she becomes her Registrar. In less than two years she passes her M.D. and four years later, she becomes an Asstt. Secretary at a suburban hospital with a consulting room of her own. Thus Boozie plays a great role in building her career.

The relationship is entirely that of a teacher and student. Boozie's interest in Sarita lies in the fact that she is a woman even though married. Sarita tolerates it when he puts his hand on her shoulder, slaps her on her back, holds her hand or hugs her. She finds it necessary to please him as all the talents of her husband have failed to bring money enough for a decent living. Her husband dislikes Boozie but does not ask her why Boozie has given her money to set up a consulting room of her own. Such cowardice and opportunism makes him despicable in her eyes. As for Boozie she cannot hate him because "behind the facade of aggressive, virile masculinity there was nothing at all." So Boozie represents the peculiar type of men who build an image of masculinity to hide the absence of it. Boozie has been introduced into the novel to expose the spinelessness of Sarita's husband.

In *The Binding Vine* Urmila's friendship with Dr. Bhaskar Jain borders on extra-marital relationship but does not develop into it. Urmila, an educated woman, a lecturer in a college has married a man of her choice and needs no monetary support from him. Her husband, an officer in the navy, remains far from home most of his time. When, he visits his home occasionally he seeks to satisfy her with sex. That frustrates her as she longs for emotional security and wants to reach his spiritual centre. She loves her husband and wishes to live with him and children permanently like a good house wife. Her daughter's death leaves her emotionally disturbed with no option but to cope with her grief alone. Dr. Bhaskar Jain, a sympathetic listener steps in her life in that situation. He understands her feelings and helps her accept her loss. Her near ones like Innies and Vanaa dissuade her from going out with

Bhaskar but she revolts against traditional limitations to assert her individuality. Bhaskar takes her to his residence and introduces her to his mother and tells her that she wants him to get married to a “Sweet, homely, fair convent educated girl” but he has “fallen in love with a dark, sharp-tongued married woman.” That open declaration of love ends abruptly their relationship as her love for Kishore has a firm hold on her married life. Overcoming all temptations she chooses “to just think virtue and chastity and being a good wife.”

There are several cases of extra-marital relationship in the *Small Remedies*- all meant to serve some purpose. Savitribai’s father has a mistress, a famous thumri-singer. Though people look in amusement and gossip about it as he visits her regularly, they are not outraged as that is deemed normal for a man, a wealthy one and head of a family at that : “That he had a mistress was accepted, a wife from one’s own class, a mistress from another- this was normal.”

It is otherwise in case of Savitribai Indorekar. She is married and belongs to a respectable family but elopes with her tabla player to realize her dream of becoming a famous musician. She lives in a strange locality among people totally unknown to her. She finds there an opportunity to reach her goal. It is a story of success in that sense. However, she fails morally as she hides part of her life to her biographer by blanking out her association with her lover, Ghulam Saab and Munni, their daughter. Later, Ghulam Saab returns to his wife in old age who accepts her reluctantly. The only problem she faces is his long association with Savitribai has made him vegetarian. Savitribai at that stage desperately seeks respectability by putting on her mangalsutra which she had discarded earlier. Munni, her daughter begins with dissociating herself from her father, Ghulam Saab early in childhood and goes to the extent of denying her mother too later. When she meets her childhood friend Madhu in a bus, she refuses to be called Munni or Meenakshi Indorekar. She introduces herself as Shailaja Joshi. This is because there are different yard sticks for men and women in our society. Deviations from convention are ignored in case of men, particularly the rich ones but not so in case of women. Few women have courage enough to cope with the problem without resorting to suppression of truth and even downright falsehood.

The case of Madhu’s father is but the other proof of it. He is a widower. He is bringing up a daughter on his own with only a male servant at home. He ignores religious customs and rituals, smokes and drinks and has a mistress. Madhu learns about the mistress from her friend Munni at an age when she is unable to make out what it means. The conservative folk in Neemgaon disapprove the ways of Savitribai but do not bother about him. As the novelist put it: “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.”

Leela’s father had an affair with a widow. Her mother tells her about it shortly before her death. The widow was the daughter of Leela’s aunt. She was brought in to help her mother as the latter fell ill after the birth of her daughter. The widow stayed at Leela’s parental home for sometime with her son and left. Nobody bothered about it and even Leela could not have known about it if her mother had not unburdened the secret to her.

The son of that widow casts a shadow on the married life of Madhu. Madhu goes to an exhibition and comes across a painting bearing the title 'The Mistress.' She looks into the name of the painter in the catalogue and reads: 'He died young, he committed suicide.' That reminds her of what Leela had told her as well as what happened once in her life – a sexual encounter with that widow's son. He had come to console her during her father's illness, but the physical contact aroused him and she too was receptive. That single sexual encounter in her pre-marital life at the age of 15 slips out of her memory. As she does not want to hide anything, she tells her about it. That makes their relations sour : "Purity, chastity, intact hymen-these are the things Som is thinking of, these are the truths that matter...Som cannot believe me. He won't believe there is nothing more to tell. He thinks I am holding back."

There are extra-marital relations in *Moving on* too- namely, Malu's relation with Shyam and Manjari's with Raman Kumar. Manjari gives up studying medicine and marries Shyam, a Sindhi cinematographer much against the wishes of her family. Later Shyam has an affair with her sister making her pregnant. It ends tragically as Malu dies of a post-natal complication after giving birth to a baby girl. Malu's death is followed by Shyam's suicide. Manjari adopts their baby girl, Sachi as her own daughter. Thus Manjari is betrayed by her sister and husband and the affairs brings happiness to none. Her mother's desperate attempts to protect her daughter Malu from society show how patriarchal norms make the women vulnerable all the time.

Manjari's relationship with her tenant, Raman Kumar stands apart from all the above. Manjari is a widow who has undergone period of struggle and strain. She is self supporting, refuses financial assistance from her father, lives among strangers, withstands threats from mafia and turns down Raja's repeated proposals to marry disapproving his role of a protecting male in her life. True, she fails to her sexuality. She negotiates with the relentless demands of body by sleeping with her tenant Raman Kumar, a much younger man. That she does on her own terms, at her whim and desire, not his: "only the body, his body, only my body, my starved body. No thought, no feelings, only sensations." This response to the call of her body is revealed to Raja but she does not permit him or anyone to dictate. She moves on and lives on her own life.

Shashi Deshpande's depiction of extra-marital relations as given above is mostly realistic, though few women go to the extent Manjari has gone. Both men and women enter into relation with persons other than their spouse sometimes. That takes place not only before marriage but even after that. In the novels discussed above, one that of Madhu with the painter is pre-marital, all the rest are post-marital. Such relations seem to be as old as the institution of marriage. Vatsyayana devotes the fifth book of his *Kamasutra* to discussion about extra-marital relations. He analyses the reasons that lead a married women to seek a different lover and suggests ways and means to prevent growth and culmination of such relations. Later works on erotics follow him to some extent. Numerous stories, novels and poems in the east and the west have been written on the theme. Deshpande adds something new to that starting from a feminist stand.

Caste Conflict: Caste is a traditional feature of Hindu society. It leads to differences and conflicts. Shashi Deshpande is aware of the caste issues and gives a glimpse of the caste hysteria in *A Matter of Time*. Gopal's father "disclaimed his identity as a Brahmin out of disgust when they reviled him for marrying his brother's widow" and being a Brahmin meant nothing to Gopal. Yet, he was charged with having written an article from the platform of Brahmanism and abused as 'bastard of a Brahmin.' They hit him "with their fists, their feet, anywhere, everywhere" and compelled him to retract his article. That shows the irrationality of judging a person by his birth.

Unfortunately, such things happen not only in the backward areas of India but caste consciousness and caste tensions seem to be increasing in Maharashtra, Tamilnadu and Kerala. Socio-political leaders of our country have dreamt since long of a casteless society. Besides a lot of propaganda, numerous laws and administrative measures have been adopted for the uplift of the dalits and backward sections of the society. But all that has failed to remove caste differences. This is because electoral politics in India rests mainly on caste, language and religion and it is easiest to get votes on caste loyalty. Reservation has contributed not a little to tension. It has become a well-established practice to deify or malign persons on the grounds of naught else but the caste origin. Gopal in *The Matter of Time* is a poor victim of that practice.

COMMUNAL CONFLICT: British imperialism played communal card to divide the people to perpetuate their rule. They left the country divided in two parts—Indian Union and Pakistan. That created problems, even tensions but communal harmony was restored soon and lasted for decades. However, communal forces raised their head high during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Demolition of the Mosque of Ayodhya on Dec. 6, 1992 marked the sad turn of the events. It was followed by serial blasts and riots in Bombay in 1993.

We find a reference to these events in *Small Remedies*. Madhu's son, Aditya, a promising youth is killed during the riots. But the novel also deals with an incident which shows the victory of sanity. Savitribai's guru used to teach music at Bhavani Temple in Bhavanipur. After his death, his disciples began to organize an all-night performance on her death anniversary every year. Rashid Mian, his famous student performed at the first anniversary. So it is but natural that Hasina, a student of Savitribai is chosen to perform at the latest anniversary. But under the changed, tense situation since 1992 there are people who do not like the idea of a Muslim singing on the occasion. Some outsiders have crept in the locality to create trouble. So, one day when Madhu, wearing Salwar-Kameez, is going out on bike with Hari some unknown people mistaking her for Hasina attack and injure them. Hasina is unnerved and refuses to perform but Madhu and others insist and persuade her. Madhu writes a powerful article about the significance of the anniversary appealing all to perpetuate the tradition of communal harmony. At last, Hasina performs well without any disturbances. The incident suggests that sane people can thwart the communal forces if they are determined and united.

Thus we find that Shashi Deshpande is aware of a wide range of problems and succeeds in displaying their impact on social beings, thereby challenging people to face them sanely and bravely.

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