CHAPTER-VI

CONCLUSION

Feminist criticism is marked by the image of women in literature and its impact on the treatment to women in real life. Whether the both are interdependent on each other? The representation of women in positive and powerful image can bring change in the position and status of women in society. Feminism refuses the patriarchal theory that focuses on biological distinction between the men and women and make it a basic criteria to evaluate their personality and achievement.

Since the objective of creating a literary piece is entertaining as well as giving a message to society in such a way that in spite of lot many undulations of female ego the novel ends in an absolutely optimistic note as it depicts an end of search for identity of the chief protagonist Jaya who realizes her own self, breaks her long silence and expresses her creative upsurge through writings which provide her an identity and ultimately self-satisfaction. To the arena of feminism the contribution of women writers in English in India is of vital importance. Advocacy for women’s liberation is not new but the way few Indian English women writers ventured to reconcile and to retain those efforts is undoubtedly an object of applause. In a nutshell the kind of contribution they have made
to the English writing which seems more like a battle for women’s right was not new but was taken over again instead.

The relief from dependency was still out of the reach of most women. So the battle for emancipation was taken over by a few educated women who, in their efforts to communicate to the world their own bitter experience as women’s well as their ideas of social reform, turned writers (Rammurthi, 1987:67).

It is sheer coincidence that much of the contribution in fiction has been given by those writers who have witnessed cruel treatment to women around them. Resultantly they tried to tell the world the kind of predicaments women faced and the kind of losses Indian society made to them. Tinge of their own life is one of the contents which has made their writing read in India as well as abroad,

They tried to tell the world the obstacles women faced and the disadvantages they suffered is an orthodox Hindu world. These women writers struggled to give form and shape to their autobiographical accounts which attracted publishers both in India and abroad (Alphono-Karkala, 1970:78).

As far as the conception of feminism pertaining the women writers of 70’s and 80’s are concerned, it revolves around the transformation of
women from conventional to unconventional standard of life and it is nothing to be surprised about. But Shashi Deshpande, a recent author in Indian English writing of 70’s is different from the rest of the writers not for the support she shows to her women characters but the way she analyses the way of women characters who are shifting from conventional to unconventional and then shifting from unconventional to conventional women again. Shashi Deshpande delves deep into the psyche of her characters to reveal various dimensions of their personalities. Women should be able to draw strength from their relationship and craft a way of life that includes serving others without being subservient. Shashi Deshpande has portrayed empowered Indian woman who move away from our stereotypical traditional notions that need to be redefined to create a better world based on equality. She has made it very clear that femininity or masculinity is the result of gendering. This ‘gendering’ is a matter of culture. The excellent qualities such as mothering, caring, nurturing, tolerance are not practiced by men; they devalue them for power and success. It is the patriarchal set up which has made men hard and harsh by denying him the opportunity to nurture and care. The requirement of the time, therefore, is that men and women should share the positive feminine and masculine qualities and that everyone should be gentle, caring, nurturing, strong, rational, emotional and individualistic.
Deshpande is a prolific writer. She is very much concerned about feministic issues in all most in her novels. In all her literary creations she writes something on one or the other serious problems regarding the status and identity of women in Indian society. Her That Long Silence and Dark Holds no Terrors are mile stones which address the issues of silent suffering of women, that gradually smothers her creativity and her inborn talent. If Jaya in That Long Silence is a typical conventional woman Sarita in Dark Holds no Terrors is self assured, self confident, independent doctor, Jaya, despite being an efficient creative writer stops writing when after her marriage, her husband develops inferiority complex in her while Sarita was victim of sadomasochism of her husband and finds difficult to share this secret with anyone. At close of these novels both of them realize the necessity to revolt against the autocrat attitude of the husband and decide to express themselves. Thus That Long Silence and Dark Holds no Terrors depicts remarkable journey of woman from silence to speech. This is great contribution of Shashi Deshpande to feministic issues.

In Small Remedies Shashi Deshpande depicts the immense problems and obstacle women have to undergo only because of their sex and society's mental set up, segregation of roles by society etc. The theme of Small Remedies revolves around two characters who are rebel in the
real sense. Though they are not doing anything extra-ordinary or unethical but they are just pursuing their dreams, making a mark of their own and want to live a substantial life. But the price they have to pay in the form of living a secluded life, being treated as social outcaste and rejected by their own family. One of them was a rebel as she developed passion for music while the other married to a man of her choice.

Shashi Deshpande is undoubtedly one of the best Indian English women novelists who contributed to feminist writing but quite inadvertently. She has never written to be publicized as a feminist writer but delineated a real picture of a woman of 70 and eighties instead. In order to harmonize a balance she has not presented her ideal picture but in a realistic way her approach is pragmatic. If desertion of bad makes her a traditional wife then acceptance of good puts her in the category of a modern educated woman and so consequently her protagonists are a fine blend of conventional and un-conventional traits. Inspite of her dynamic contribution she made to the Indian English writing, considerably to the feminist kind of writing she has never proclaimed that she is a feminist. It is a kind of flairs which instill into her blood not in her mind, since she has penned what she had to and it has earned authenticity because it was an ink of a women herself.
I realize that I write what I write because I write because I have to. Because it is within me. It’s one point of view, a world form within the woman and that I think is my contribution to Indian writing (Deshpande, 1989).

Against the claim that she is a feminist, one should see that firstly, she is a woman, so whatever she writes carry a glimpse of her nature, her real world. But secondly, the portrayal she has given to her chosen female character is how the situation of women is all the world over, “If others see something feminist in my writing I must say that it is not consciously done. It is because the world for women is like that and I am mirroring the world (Deshpande, 1990).” She has worked with the two juxtaposition forces, i.e. fantasy and reality. On one hand she is quite enough fantastic to be called fictionist and on the contrary she doesn’t make her writing monotonous stuffing them with teaching and anticipations. She portrays her characters historically, i.e. what life is, rather than what life should be, “She believes in presenting life as it is and not as it should be” (Sheshadri 1988:94).

Every artist has/her own way to sequence the events of art which is his first priority. So dealing with human life is Shashi Deshpande’s first choice. “There are some, may be several, choices in the technique…. but not in the characters” (Deshpande 1998:193). She has made not only the
characters of vital importance but the way she has brought them into her novel is also unique. They are not directly encompassing the imprints of the novelist nor as the situation demands, but since they are important so they are made the same in her hands, “I don’t think any character in my novels comes out of necessary, to serve some need of mine” (Holmstrom, 1993:22-24). She holds the instincts of human kindness. So her characters are not women characters first but they are the “Human Beings first in the world around and no supermen” (Corvollo 1990).

Readers willing to study Shashi’s characters real nature and type they have to go into layers. She deviates at every step in portraying her characters, which makes them differently interesting, i.e. without having notion of preaching, with the instincts of humanistic attitude delineates a real picture of women that too unintentionally and at the last inspite of having a pen in her hand she has made her women as weak as they are in their real life. “My characters take their own ways. I’ve heard people saying we should have strong women characters. But my writing has to do with women as they are “(Vishwanatha 1987:12).

Even at the selection of real women characters of 70’s and 80’s again she takes a specification in creating her writing i.e. the specification of middle class educated and economically dependent ladies. She goes neither for Shobha De’s high-society fashionable females of Bombay nor
psychic characters of Anita Desai. Her ‘woman’ are presented perturbed either sexually or professionally via the family relationships, either conjugal or social,

Human relationship is what a writer is involved with. Person to person and person to society relationship 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 (Gangadharan 1998:ii).

According to Deshpande even if a person is leading his life in accordance to his criteria though he is well-educated, successful but if he is alone he can’t stay happy, since man is a social animal. This condition, according to Shashi Deshpande, is more applicable to women. God has made women with her own emotional attachments and this she pays for when it becomes her weakness, so according to Shashi Deshpande a socially successful woman surely can’t stay alone. For getting her identity she leaves everything but reaching at its zenith she again misses her lost relations and tries to reconcile them.

It’s needed, it’s necessary for women to live within relationships. But if the rules are rigidly laid that as a wife or mother you do this and no further, then one becomes unhappy.
This is what I have tried to convey in my writing. What I don’t agree with is the idealization of motherhood the false and sentimental notes that accompany it (Literature Alive:13).

A very general query which readers can go for is what is the reason that Shashi Deshpande has chosen a middle class educated and financially independent woman character? and for this the best possible answer is that she herself has come from such kind of background. Secondly, in her childhood whatsoever the society was full of two contrary forces, i.e., principles and reality and so, she took and preoccupied her mind with these opposite forces while writing.

In the theme of a conventional story, a conventional woman character unconventionally marries to her beloved and they start living happily forever but Shashi Deshpande’s novels are a journey of a middle class educated financially independent woman from unconventional marriage to conventional submission to the society and relations. Because of the traditional suppression her characters go against society but later on deal with the predicaments of adjustment and conflicts in their mind and eventually submit to the tradition. ShantaKrishnaswamy says,

Despite the changes in the norms, the variations in taste, in standard of judgement, the impact of western culture and alien moves economic and educational progress. She (woman) is
essentially Indian to sensibility and likely to remain so
(Krishnaswami:31).

Through all these varied ways Shashi Deshpande carries a unique position in Indian English writings. She is less bothered about her woman character’s adjustment or mal-adjustment but more about their submission to the traditional roles. She writes at one instance, “writers appear not to have paid much attention to the recent phenomenon of the educated earning wife and her adjustment or maladjustment in the family (Shirwadhkar, 1979:31).” Shashi Deshpande emerges as a champion of women’s cause who expresses their pent up emotions, problems, turmoil and tries to suggest a solution in the family matrixes. Ultimately almost all her novels end with a beautiful ray of sparking hope—hope of self-consciousness, self-assertion, self-fulfillment, commitment and that too devoid of any guilt they retain their marriage and continue with the job or some other creative, fulfilling work that gives them inner satisfaction. They reject all the old parameters of feminism, i.e. self-sacrifice, alienation and detachment from the society. Shashi Despande firmly believes in human relationships and its interdependence with society and so she has made her protagonist a balanced person. She has recognized not only her identity but put efforts also to retain it. And at the basis of her honesty, innocence, courage, confidence and consideration for social
value and family, she ultimately attained her individually and makes others to realize that she is existing like any another human being.

The intense specification of the middle class educated and financially independent women character of Shashi Deshpande has played a vital role in the novel. Had her characters been lower class financially dependent women, as of Sita of Anita Desai’s *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* or as of her Maya of *Cry, the Peacock*, comparatively less educated then they would not have put efforts to harmonize their conjugal relations. Shashi Deshpande’s heroines had analytical powers so they would neither turn psychic nor would leave their happy married life, but rather try to find the solution in the family matrix. They do not belong to high society again so that they would keep aside the social taboos and would not comprise. But Shashi Deshpande’s heroines in such an awkward situation try to go for the apt solution, instead of reacting or complaining. Shashi Deshpande’s *That Long Silence, Small Remedies, The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *Roots and Shadows* are fine examples reflecting journey of modern women towards self-identity and self-fulfillment.

To sum up, the characterization of female characters in the novels is handled in a very well manner. The use of stream of consciousness technique brings a reality in their character. They
have been presented through different perspectives. Shashi Deshpande created immortal characters every India woman would like to identify with. They are true feminist, but not from the western point of view. They work passionately to satisfy their inner desire and defend what they seriously believed in and once they have chosen the path, nothing could ever bend their spirit. Through her protagonists Deshpande has portrayed the new Indian woman who understands herself and to preserve her identity as wife, mother, and above all, as a human being in the tradition bound, male-dominated Indian women and her dilemmas, her efforts to society and thus undoubtedly she has secured her place among the best fiction writers.
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