CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

[Porcupines] huddle together for warmth, but their sharp quills prick each other, so they pull away. But then they get cold. They have to keep adjusting their closeness and distance to keep from freezing and from getting pricked by their fellow porcupines- the source of both comfort and pain. We need to get close to each other to have a sense of community, to feel we’re not alone in the world. But we need to keep our distance from each other to preserve our independence, so others don’t impose on or engulf us. This duality reflects the human condition. We are individual and social creatures. We need other people to survive, but we want to survive as individuals (Tannen as qtd. in Ronald and Rodman, Understanding Human Communication, 198).

In the illustration given on top, Deborrah Tannen, Georgetown Linguistics Professor and scholar talks about porcupines that huddle together for warmth in winter, but prick each other with their quills, so they back off, but try again for the warmth, and get pricked and back off and so on. Through this illustration, Tannen stresses that human beings have a perpetual nervousness between their need for independence and their dependency needs. When independence or individuality comes into being, it brings with it individual thoughts, feelings, freedom and responsibility. But with independence, also come isolation, alienation and bewilderment. Therefore, the man wants to be independent when surrounded by others but needs other people to get rid of his isolation. Hence, the key to strong relationships lies in striking a right mixture of dependence and independence.

In the preceding chapters, the need for interpersonal relationships and the various dynamics underlying these relationships in Shashi Deshpande’s selected fiction was studied and the study ultimately came to the conclusion that Deshpande’s views on relationships are somewhat like those of Deborah Tannen, as human beings are also like porcupines, perplexed at being caught in the duality of independence and interdependence. The whole argument boils down to one point that relationships are
inevitable. The novels chosen for this study are obviously concerned with the theme of relationships as each novel, in fact each detail reverberates with relational energy. The novels reveal the relationships between the mother-daughter, father-daughter, grandparents and grand-children, relations in the joint family, husband-wife, and the extramarital relationships between the protagonists and their friends. It is different that in one novel one category of relationships take the foremost importance and in the other novel that may take the back seat. Therefore, it is almost impossible to categorise Deshpande's novels into water-tight compartments on the basis of representation of relationships of different categories in different novels.

The study established the novelist's unflinching faith in the need to form bonds as there is no other way to fulfil any kind of needs given in Maslow's model of hierarchy of needs. Socialising and developing relationships, according to Maslow, is one of the important survival needs of an individual. As soon as a child is born, the process of establishing interpersonal relationships starts. In fact, to be more precise, the mother-child relationship starts right from the time when the mother conceives a child and it continues till death, interspersed by many other kinds of relationships which develop during the course of an individual's life. Nurturance of a child includes more than just feeding and diaper changing. Every human being, whether an infant or a child, or even an adult, wants to be held, to be talked, to be loved. This necessitated a study of the various dynamics like the need for touch, the need for communication and the need for love and belongingness, as suggested by Deshpande very overtly through the myriad relationships of the protagonists Saru, Indu, Jaya and Manjari in the selected fiction. The previous chapters highlighted these apparently simple but genuinely important needs of all the characters in the novels. It was also seen as how the failure to meet any of the above-mentioned needs in any relationship, leads to failure in meeting a character's higher level needs given by Maslow, like the need for self-esteem, self-realization and self-actualisation.

Shashi Deshpande's novels chosen for this study deal with the theme of quest for a female identity, the complexities of man-woman relationship particularly in the context of marriage and the trauma of a disturbed childhood and adolescence. Her women belonging to Indian middle class in a traditional environment have always
been struggling to liberate themselves and seek their self-identity and independence. The protagonist in each novel faces a different problem within her family. This necessitated a subjective study of relationships in each novel in a separate chapter. In the novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, there is an unwarranted situation in which the protagonist places herself, resulting into a lack of perfect understanding. The male protagonist tries to dominate the female protagonist, which ultimately results in disintegration of her personality. But she realizes towards the end that she is an individual who need to work on a blend of acceptance and rejection. The author believes that Indian male still finds it difficult to accept his wife earning bread and butter for the family. But the things can be worked out by adopting flexibility and rejecting rigidity in husband-wife relationships. The novel *Roots and Shadows* analyses the relational perspective through an exploration of the inner self of the protagonist who symbolises the new woman, who is educated and intelligent but her feminine instinct for articulation is suppressed. The novel also projects the relational problems of educational women in joint families who are unable to enfranchise the traditional background in which they are reared. In *That Long Silence*, the protagonist again has to bear all the responsibility to re-establish harmony in her marital relationships. Deshpande reveals the consciousness of the protagonist through an exposition of her mind in the process of thinking, feeling and reacting to the people in her immediate environment. In *The Moving On*, the protagonist is not the structurally patterned woman of the traditional Indian society. The novelist reveals the uneasiness of the modern Indian woman on being caught in a conflict between tradition and modernity.

Deshpande’s protagonists find out who they are; not only by looking within, but from the clues about themselves which they receive by building bonds and associations with others. The negative feedback which the protagonists like Jaya, Saru and Manjari received from their mothers and Indu the mother-less child from her surrogate Akka, in the form of labels like incompetent, unworthy and disgusting, inclined them to inculcate negative images of themselves in their minds, making them insecure and bitter in their other relationships. In actual fact, the protagonists generally had a negative relationship with their mother which is quite unusual in Indian culture. Harbouring negative and hostile relationships with their mothers but
secretly craving to be touched, hugged and heard by their mothers; these characters are unable to fulfil their need for belongingness and love; remaining thereby low in self-esteem and validating thereby a correlation between different human needs as propounded by Maslow in his theory. According to Maslow, an individual is ready to act upon the growth needs if and only if his deficiency needs like physiological needs, safety needs, need for belongingness, love and esteem needs are met; for the reason that each lower need must be met at least to a reasonable extent before moving to the next higher level. Being unable to fulfil their basic needs for love, affection and security; the protagonists remain frustrated throughout their lives and are powerless to find satisfaction in their married life. For example, Sara, the protagonist of The Dark Holds No Terrors, bears traumas of this sort which are apt to leave psychological wounds that never heal completely. As a result, the later stress after her marriage reactivates these wounds, making it difficult for her to handle her relationships. Shashi Deshpande thereby, shatters the mother myth, the image of the mother as always loving, forgiving and sacrificing for her children. This myth is hard to overcome by other authors but she feels that the valorisation of the motherhood has rather become a successful business in movies and literature. In a talk delivered by Deshpande on 30 October, 1997 in Zurich under the auspices of The Swiss-India Society Zurich and The Volkerkundemuseum der Universität Zurich; she gives a shocking revelation that, “motherhood does not turn you overnight into a different, a nobler, and stronger and more loving and lovable individual. You’re still the same person you were” (Deshpande, “The Indian woman-Stereotypes, Images and Realities” ch.8m.com). She further wonders if giving power to a woman as a mother, denies her power other than as a mother. That is why in most Hindi movies the mother takes pride in her self-effacement but is often depicted as a suffering and weeping woman. Through the mother figures in her novels, Deshpande has revealed her conviction that we need to be much less sentimental about mothers. The author’s views on motherhood corroborate Sudhir Kakkar’s views of the ‘good mother’ as expressed by him in his book The Inner World. Sudhir Kakkar believes that the picture of a ‘good mother’ is a male construct. He feels that we need to get rid of the stereotype images of mothers as loving and sacrificing as women now days have a more realistic viewpoint about their mothers. Deshpande knows that the mother-
daughter relationship being the most uncompromising one in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, is the most shocking one for the readers. But by exploding the myth of a woman being a martyr and the paragon of virtues; she proposes to help her readers to get rid of their guilty complexes. Deshpande knows that myths are necessary to live by, as they are woven into the fabric of Indian culture, but her assertion is to redefine the roles and restructure the system. Deshpande says in this respect to Chandra Holm in an interview “The Indian Woman-Stereotypes, Images and Realities”:

> We are looking for a fresh knowledge of ourselves in them, trying to discover what is relevant to our lives today. We don’t reject the ideals, but we know we can’t approximate to these pictures of ideal womanhood. And we will not bear any guilt that we cannot do so. More important than knowing what we are not is to know what we are, what is possible for us (Deshpande, ch.8m.com.).

The social context, working in tandem with patriarchal forces, also contribute to the unhappiness of the protagonists but the study as proposed in the introductory chapter, focussed more on the psychological reasons and the working of the mind than on the sociological reasons, with the assumption that the outer world is only a reflection of our inner world. Our thoughts and feelings dictate the way we perceive and experience life and relationships with others. Another natural and the most obvious reason for choosing this approach was to synchronize with the author’s own psychological perspective of delineating the complexities involved in the seemingly common and hassle-free involvements. Deshpande’s philosophy which emerges on the basis of this study is that people and the environment only respond and correspond to the kind of vibrations they generate. Trapped by emotions, human beings suffer and make their relations also suffer. Deshpande’s sole mission to work with the thought processes of the characters, the characters’ attitude and perspective towards life, and most importantly towards themselves, left no more choice or even the desire to substantiate any other idea than the theme of interpersonal relationships from the perspective of Psychology for this study. Surprisingly, although Deshpande’s books are psychological, with a lot of growth of characters and an analysis of the characters which is very psychological from the perspectives of Freud and Jung; but she has
never studied Psychology. There are occasional references to Freud in her works, but her portrayals are based on her uncanny observations. She tells the interviewer Chandra Holm, “I never read anything from them. Even today, I haven't read anything from them. I only know little bit from what is written about them here and there” (Deshpande, ch8m.com).

A very outstanding fact emerging from this study is Deshpande’s preference for characters to plot; a viewpoint she has also stated very clearly to her interviewers. Deshpande seems very definite of her technique of writing and this study of the selected fiction validates Deshpande’s views expressed to the interviewers. The chosen fiction confirmed that Deshpande always foresees a picture of her every character in mind before portraying it on paper. While depicting the development of a character and his relationships with other characters in the environment, the plot develops reflexively without any planning. Therefore, she does not have any conscious mission behind her writings and she leaves it to the readers to analyse and evaluate her works as they like.

The analysis of a literary work entails an analysis of its plot-structure and its literary value can be established after that. Although Shashi Deshpande does not plan the plots of her novels, she is aware of the fact that the novel when it comes in print becomes the property of the readers who have the freedom to interpret it in any way they like it. The reader’s perspective may not have compatibility with the author’s perspective, as the same things may mean different to different people. Therefore, this study has brought into fore certain dynamics of interpersonal relationships, some of which might not have even been envisaged by the author at the time of conceptualising her characters. For example, the need analysis of the protagonists from the point of view of Maslow and also knowledge of the other dynamics like the positive and negative connotations of silence necessitated reading the lines along with reading between the lines. Nevertheless, the basic logic is that the interpretation of the characters, their mind-sets and their reactions to their environment, always has some common logics. Therefore it is certainly possible to see the relationships various times, though reflexively, in the same way as the writer sees these. A very interesting fact which emerged out of the study of Deshpande’s novels is that regardless of her
claims that her writings just happen without much planning; her novels exhibit her superb craftsmanship in describing the minute details, undoubtedly giving the impression that there is a blend of conscious and unconscious efforts to make these worthy of various kind of interpretations.

Looking at the plot of *Roots and Shadows*, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *That Long Silence*, one finds not much development. The action is slow and the venue for the action is generally the interior of the mind of the protagonists. But there is certainly the development of the characters from frustrated, depressed and introvert beings to individuals with self-esteem and self-realization. They become problem-focused and concerned about their personal growth along with their fulfilment through positive relationships. In Maslow’s conceptualisation, as developed by him in his book *Motivation and Personality*, such individuals can be termed as self-actualised individuals to some extent. Maslow’s basic proposition is that as one becomes more self-actualised and self-transcendent, one becomes wiser (develops wisdom) and automatically knows what to do in a variety of situations. Self-actualisation is the summit of Maslow’s theory of needs. According to Maslow, self-actualized people look within themselves and realize their potentialities to make balance between their outer world and inner world. Deshpande’s protagonists become self-actualised in the sense that they embrace the facts and realities of life rather than denying and avoiding them. They decide to take an initiative to solve their problems and accept facts. They have discernment and are able to view all things in an objective manner.

Whereas in the old novels of Deshpande, the focus is more on the development of character than the plot; in *Moving On*, the plot develops parallel to the character development of the protagonist. Nevertheless, one thing is very clear that both in the new novels and the old novels of Deshpande, the characters are not stereotypes. Each protagonist is different from the other and has individual personality with peculiar needs which is quite different from the stereotypes created by the society. There is no intention to prove anything; hence the characters are ordinary human beings having imperfections and committing follies reflecting Deshpande’s dissatisfaction with the society. The turmoil in the minds of her characters comes through the turmoil and the turbulence in the author’s mind, instinctively out of a
desire to write something but definitely not to prove something. In her interview with Chandra Holm, she stated in a very composed manner that she does not write to educate the world as people have refused to be educated. Different readers react to her works in a different manner but they do not want to be educated. Therefore she has evolved through her experiences that literature is not propaganda as it can't educate anyone. It can give a clear perspective to one’s thoughts, one’s view point, which is not created exactly after reading books, but is something already in the mind of the readers.

Critics have interpreted Deshpande’s novels as depicting the loneliness of women. This study established the fact in different chapters that it is not only the loneliness of the women characters, the author is talking about. Rather, the philosophy of Deshpande is that all human beings are lonely irrespective of the gender. Women, owing to social constructs and also due to their different frame of mind which may be a blend of social forces and their endocrinological differences from the men, are lonelier than men. But Deshpande believes that loneliness is experienced by everyone at one point of life or other and this thinking of hers is reflected in all her novels. If there is loneliness of Indu, Mini, Saru, Saru’s mother, Jaya and Manjari; the loneliness of the male characters like Manu, Saru’s Baba, Mohan and Manjari’s Husband and Manjari’s Baba also reflects unobtrusively through the pages of Deshpande’s novels. Further, Deshpande’s viewpoint established through her novels is that at roots, all human beings are lonely but there is a difference between being lonely and being alone. Loneliness is a state of mind whereas aloneness connotes physical isolation. Deshpande talks about the loneliness of her characters that are lonesome in spite of the presence of other characters. In the absence of any fulfilment from one relationship, the loneliness gnaws them, making them lonesome even in their ensuing relationships. Deshpande ultimately discloses a philosophy that it is through introspection, intuitiveness and reflectivity, that an individual realizes that he is lonely and not alone. Loneliness can be eradicated only by the individual who is a victim of that, when he probes himself. Therefore, it is vital for every human being to spend some time with himself in aloneness. Existentialism which propagates the essential aloneness of the individual is the catchword in all the novels of Deshpande.
For Deshpande, the process of interpersonal relationships is like a minefield. When a man is happy, he wants to share his happiness with others and when he is depressed, vulnerable and insecure even then he wants to relate and talk to others. Even the simplest gestures like a friendly pat, a genuine smile, a few encouraging words or even a comforting silence can have an unanticipated impact and a message, “I’m with you no matter what the life is. So just move on.” These signposts are never found in Deshpande’s novels. The conspicuous absence of touch, smile, loving words and healthy communication seem like a strategy of the writer to make the readers realize the need for these dynamics in any successful relationships. Deshpande’s point is that relationships are considered natural and effortless by most of the people and there lies a trap. We need to be mindful of what we are doing when we want to build relationships with others and keep on working at it if it is not a smooth sailing.

The study started with Deshpande’s statement that the two important concerns of a creative writer are to deal with person to person and person to society relationships. She further revealed her stance by saying that person to person relationships are immensely important to her and she is interested in going deep into the interpersonal relationships and the exploration of the human mind. The study of the chosen novels, undoubtedly, justified the convictions of the author revealed to many interviewers. The study, during the course of its evolution, unfolded various unanticipated revelations entailing the evolution of a gallery of characters-ranging from the female protagonist to their male counterparts, their fathers, mothers, grandparents, uncles, aunts and the male friends of the protagonists with astonishing details. Therefore, Deshpande discloses her excellence in analysing the psychology of a multitude of characters in different age groups. The theme of relationships is not a new theme with Indian writers in English but what to me was remarkable, was the way Deshpande understands and depicts the struggle in the mind of each character involved in relationship with others. Deshpande’s characters with all their deviousness and goodness, manipulations and innocence, rebellion and mellowing down, trauma, turmoil and self-realization –move ahead with grace, serenity and understanding, watching the river of life to flow sometime turbulent and the other times placid.
The author’s belief is that though evil is ingrained more in some people; there is also morality to check on it. Ultimately, the good prevails upon the bad, restoring the harmony in relationships. So the total effect of every novel is the characters carved with details which are very near to reality and particularly the reality of the human mind which is entirely specific. For Deshpande, attainment of objectivity in relationships is extremely difficult if not possible. Every individual has his personal perceptual grid in his brain through which all sensory information about the persons linked to him passes for interpretation and integration with others. In simple words, it means that everyone’s experience of the world is administered through his perceptions, how things seem to him, what he says to himself when he is touched by others. Therefore, Deshpande’s protagonists see others not as they are, but as their own personality and prejudices are; and this becomes the root cause of their problematic relationships. Deshpande also believes that no two human beings are alike in reality. There is no polarisation of the characters as good or bad, the kind of compartmentalisation found generally in Hindi movies presenting stereotypes. It is undeniably, this mysterious and incomprehensible aspect of human nature in Deshpande’s fiction which made me see her as a writer with real and plausible delineations.

The value of introspection for maintaining the sanctity of relationships, a proposition highly estimated by the celebrated author, has also been authenticated through this study. According to Deshpande, relations give a man a pattern, a mould and make him cultured. Whereas the culture makes him exhibit to the world a personality which is refined; it also restricts him to repress a large part of his desires and longings. The repressed part gradually sinks deep into the inaccessible layers of human mind, initiating a constant struggle between the suppressed and expressed feelings. This struggle can be resolved only through introspection which involves an analysis of one’s mind. Introspection lays bare many bitter and never predictable truths about one’s psyche, one’s role in the deterioration of relationships and gives many insights to channelize one’s energy for the purposes of restoration of relationships. Self-realization makes a person aware of his responsibilities towards the restoration of fractured relationships. The protagonists in Deshpande’s novels suffer a lot in their negative relationships but are confused to understand the real cause of their
It is only when they get a chance to introspect at their parental home that they can review their relationships with their spouses and become hopeful of doing something about it. They become conscious that they have never realized the need for small steps like trying to open communication barriers, giving respect to their partners and giving them a feeling of importance; and this has landed them into such painful situations where they find themselves utterly miserable and helpless. The psychologist Daniel Goleman clarifies the point by saying, “The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice there is little we can do to change until we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds” (Goleman, Vital Lies, Simple Truths 24).

For Shashi Deshpande; the attainment of objectivity in relationships is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Deshpande suggests that making a relationship work, involves many a time a lot of hard work, as the expectations from a relationship vary from individual to individual. The psychologist Abraham Maslow spent years studying healthy relationships and identifying what needs exist in relationships. This study has made use of Maslow’s ‘hierarchy of needs’, wherever it could lend plausible input for an understanding of the chosen theme. Maslow’s hierarchy not only identified what the human needs are, but also gave them a hierarchical rating. This model has been found quite useful in making a judgement of the needs of the characters requiring attention. It also helped to understand the relationships in a better way by exploring which needs of the characters should have been taken care of first. During the process of evaluating the reasons for failure in relationships of the protagonists and the other characters, and correlating these reasons with Maslow’s theory; it was felt that the protagonists and the other characters have dissatisfaction in meeting their lower level needs like the need for sex, belongingness and love; which according to Maslow, must be satisfied before proceeding to fulfil their need for growth, self-realization and self-fulfilment. For instance, in the absence of any gratification of their sexual needs; the protagonists become almost mentally sick. Therefore, Indu, Saru, Jaya and Manjari seek to fulfil their sexual needs from their extra-marital relationships. It is different that the sexual relationship does not culminate in Jaya’s relationship with Kamat and Saru’s relationship with Boozie, but in the case of Indu’s relationship with Naren and Manjari’s relationship with Raman,
where their physical needs are met; their relationship with the other characters and more importantly with themselves become positive, calm and smooth.

In Deshpande’s novels, love and sex is not necessarily one and the same thing in man-woman relationship. Love is the most powerful striving in every human being. It is the most fundamental passion which keeps a man and a woman together, a family together, a society together. The absence of loving relationships with others can make a person insane. Without love, no man can stay sane even for a day. But Deshpande doesn’t call sex love, as love in adults refers to psychic needs. It makes a person overcome the sense of isolation but true love also gives space to both the people involved in any sort of relationships, to retain their integrity. The two persons become one but at the same time they remain two. All this may not be a conscious effort; rather the care and concern are the other names for love. This realization dawns upon the protagonists only towards the end of most of Deshpande’s novels, where there is introspection and self-realization. Surprisingly, Deshpande never shows any signs of realization on the part of male protagonists. Perhaps, the Indian ethos and the social and cultural value-systems in India make Deshpande realize that the restoration of the relationships is considered here a prerogative as well as a responsibility of the women. Another explanation of it can be that women are gifted with more intuitiveness and resilience by nature and therefore they value relationships more than men.

Deshpande has grappled with the complex issues such as sensuality and sex in a bold manner in her new novels. Physical unification gains an upper hand over the union of souls in this novel. The protagonist’s relationship with her husband is more of a passionate and sexual relationship than a relationship of care, understanding, and reciprocation of feelings. The unity achieved by them is not interpersonal but only orgiastic and the body as a theme is used throughout the novel. All the protagonists of Deshpande have intense craving for sexual expression but their desires or motives differs in intensity or strength in the old novels and the new ones. The desire for sex is certainly more pronounced in Moving On than in Deshpande’s earlier novels. The glaring and the most outstanding thing about this book is the sensitivity thread which binds the protagonist’s present and past; delineating pain in her sexual relationships with her tenant Raman and the extreme ecstatic sexual relationships with her husband.
in the past when he was alive. Paradoxically, the protagonist had different expectations from both the relationships though her needs like love, affection, self-esteem, and feeling of being wanted and needed are the same. The protagonist had strong sexual urge and the sexual attraction was the main reason for her to leave her studies and get married at a very tender age but she also expected to validate her need for love and self-esteem through her sexual relations with her husband. But the protagonist indulged in sexual relationships with her tenant mainly to fulfil her bodily needs from him.

Infidelity has always been an issue of concern in Deshpande’s fiction. In Deshpande’s earlier novels, the protagonists remain in guilt when they are in a relationship which according to them they should not have entered, and feel they have done wrong. But the new woman in The Moving On has guilt pangs for a limited time. There is a drastic change in the author’s attitude in this respect as she does not hesitate to portray the new woman who fails to control her sexuality and sleeps with a much younger man on her own terms. But at the same time Deshpande makes her unruly protagonist come back in the folds of culturally assigned norms of behaviour for the women. Deshpande divulges her faith that in India, marriage is an institute which continues to hold grounds. Although Deshpande advocates an ideal family set-up where every member irrespective of gender gets equal opportunities and privileges, she clearly indicates that she vouches for relational autonomy for women, giving opportunities to them to realize their true self, not by deviating from the prescribed norms for women in Indian society. Therefore, the protagonist terminates her relationship with the younger man to fit in the boundaries set for the respectable women. At the same time, she gives total autonomy to the protagonist to lead her life in her own way without getting married with Raja. Thus author adopts a middle path in relationships- the policy of living and moving on in our life without being subservient to anyone. She thereby, is challenging the notion of female individuality as male fabrication and ushering a social and cultural change for the women. In an age of woman’s awakening and empowerment; the author has taken up an issue of Indian woman in the changing Indian society with its traditional ethos.
The study also pinpoints in its individual analysis of each novel, the discrepancy in the manner in which both the sexes decipher the meaning of love. Through the protagonists Indu, Sara, Jaya and Manjari; the author has pointed out a known but ignored truth of a wife's expectations of soothing companionship, with fervent reciprocation of affection and loving care by her husband, and an understanding of love as profoundly tinged with sheer celebration of somatic union. Getting down to the basic conjugal discord between the protagonists and their spouses which is significantly fore grounded in the chosen fiction, the study generalised that all the female protagonists unerringly pinned for emotional union which somehow they failed to have. The unmitigated absence of the emotional compatibility becomes the reason for their disconcertedness and moroseness. Loneliness also engulfs the male characters in its tentacles, forcing them to withdraw into their shells. Infact, both the male and the female live in the loneliness which is self-inflicted; as they do not attempt to break their silence through communication, which further leads to their trivialization and reduction of self.

Silence to Shashi Deshpande, has multiple connotations. If silence causes loneliness and misunderstandings, it requires communication to break it. Shashi Deshpande has stressed on the value of communication to restore the relationships in all her novels. But she has also highlighted the great gifts of silence. Silence, according to the author, gives a person clarity of vision and a deep understanding of himself or herself. Silence also helps two people to find harmony in relationships. According to Deshpande, the way to find harmony is not to get bogged down in the noise of words but sometimes it can be achieved through the language of silence. In this context, the writer Moosa Raza has quoted the mystic Jalludin Rumi giving a very wise piece of advice to everyone, “When the lips are silent, the heart has a hundred tongues. Listen! Clam up your mouth and be silent like an oyster shell, for that tongue of yours is the enemy of the soul, my friend” (Rumi as qtd. in Raza, “Rumi’s Language of Silence and Love.” Indiatimes.com). This connotation of silence is very well illustrated by Deshpande's protagonists, when they indulge in introspection. In silence, they rise above mundane realities and find many answers to their relational conflicts. Deshpande believes that silence brings stillness and a certain
energy which helps a person do self-reflection, thereby finding many clues to come out of the emotional turmoil.

The issue whether English is the language of emotional or intellectual make-up in colonial or postcolonial India, is admittedly an important one; but at the same time, it was not of much interest for this study. But what was important is the curious hybridity of local experiences in English language in Deshpande’s fiction. An overall appraisal of the thematic and technical aspects of Deshpande’s fiction is that there are certain consistent parallels, the most striking one being the emergence of all novels from her rootedness in middle-class society. The themes, characters and the locations have regional flavour and the language used is Indian English but there are no words which draw attention to language than to meaning. However, sometimes she avoids literal translations as well, using commonly, among other words, the vernacular appellations denoting family members, like Ajji (grandmother), Ai (mother), Appa/Baba (father) and Kaki (paternal aunt). As a result, the indigenous flavour and the originality of language which the author maintains time and again, is far more important to her for the delineation of relationships, than indulgence in contrived English language. She writes and portrays relationships as they are, in English, for the reason that English is the language she thinks and understands. It is crisp and colloquial, but intense enough to portray the intricacies of relationships because Deshpande is very comfortable in using English as a medium of writing. There are no superfluous words, no exaggerations but it is essentially reflective of the artistic poise and amazing originality. Raja Rao’s lines in his Foreword to Kanthapura, have become much debated exhortation in Indian writing in English. Regarding the use of English as a medium of writing in Indian writing in English, he says:

One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought – movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word ‘alien’; yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up-like Sanskrit or Persian was before - but not of our emotional make-up (Rao,vii)
The settings, the subject matter, the ethos and the images in Deshpande’s works; all express Indian ethos. Every good writer is nationwide because the writer consciously or unconsciously reveals his connection with his background and surroundings, his people and his milieu. Shashi Deshpande’s writings reveal her authenticity, integrity and her affiliation with local realities and the characters grappling with the local issues. For example, the conflicts arising owing to a wife earning more than her husband as in The Dark Holds No Terrors and insecurity of a woman living all alone as in Moving On, are the ground realities of Indian life. But this does not mean that Deshpande’s novels are read and appreciated in India only. Rather many of her novels are published by foreign publishers and enjoy immense popularity by getting translated in many foreign languages. She feels that the best books are universal as they reach all people irrespective of their country and culture but at the same time they can be deeply rooted in the writer’s culture. Raja Rao again explains this dilemma in his Foreword to Kanthapura, “We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us” (Rao, vii).

Narrative technique of Deshpande involves manipulation of time and memory in all the chosen novels. The author achieves this manipulation through devices like flashbacks, dreams, nightmares and interior monologues. Deshpande has been criticised by the critics for creating confusions, by not presenting the events and happenings in a chronological order and instead using such techniques to catch readers’ attention. In most of her novels, the first chapter or the first few pages deal with the present, the next few chapters move anachronically and the last chapter or the last few pages again are written in the present tense. Shama Futehally makes an observation in the context of narration in Roots and Shadows:

This is a device which is useful either when some element of suspense is needed, or for a novel with a non-narrative structure. For this novel, chronological clarity is essential, as the reader already has to cope with an abundance of characters and their complex Interactions. The first chapter, where we are faced with all of them simultaneously, and
without introduction, is confusing (Futehally as qtd. in Sharma, Shashi Deshpande’s Novels: A Feminist Study 77).

There is no doubt that the use of such devices slows down the action in the novel and the plot appears to be lacking in much growth, suspense or thrill but the point here is that the relationships do not grow all of a sudden. The development of the relationships is a slow process as it encompasses the complex net-work of emotions and feelings in human mind. The intuitiveness, the reflectivity and the emotional aspect of the relationships involve the delineation of the mental landscape, for which the dreams and interior monologues provide genuine clues. The emotional conflicts cannot be enacted energetically or dramatised at a fast pace. Therefore, Deshpande’s narrative technique is absolutely appropriate to depict the theme of relationships which is the core theme of her novels, the core of author’s personality.

With the introduction of elements like suspense, thrill and secret, there is a change in the narrative structure in Deshpande’s new novel Moving On. It is only towards the end of the novel, we come to know of the betrayal of Manjari’s husband Shyam, and the rape of Manjari’s sister by him. Again, the secret of Manjari’s sister Malu being the mother of Sachi is divulged in the novel quite late. Manjari’s acts of learning computer, driving a car and thoughts of using it as a taxi are the thrilling moments in the plot of Moving On. The introduction of the underworld characters is a new addition in the plot which otherwise, is devoid of energy as the earlier novels of Deshpande sometimes look. The activities and cruelties of the mafia are depicted by the author for the first time in this novel. The novel consists of twenty-three chapters divided neatly into two parts. There is a change in Deshpande’s style as the author gives a title to each chapter. Again, the author has even given specific dates for certain chapters particularly the chapters entitled ‘Baba’s Dairy.’ The narrative structure employed in this novel is the double voice, whereas it was a first person’s narration in the earlier novels. Manjari, performing the double function as a protagonist and as a narrator, narrates the story from her own point of view. The second narrator is Manjari’s father who speaks through the pages of his dairy read by Manjari after his death. There is use of stream of consciousness technique as in the earlier novels of Deshpande. There is also an exquisite and subtle use of flashback
technique which makes the readers identify these two voices as male or female. The dates and years for certain chapters are also given. The stories of three generations are told but the focus is on two generations of Manjari's family and the family of her parents.

Whereas the earlier novels of Deshpande ended on a compromising note of the protagonists, thinking of bringing change in their own perspective and hoping for a change in the perspective of their spouses; her new novel consists of more rebels than compromising characters. They are not self-sacrificing but embrace changes with the change in times. The protagonist is non-conformist and changes her way of life not according to the dictates of any character but according to the need of the hour. The instinct of survival prods her to change as she tells about the inevitability of change to her cousin Raja, "Yes, I’ve changed, Raja, I couldn’t have survived if I hadn’t changed."(159). The novel therefore, depicts a gradual growth in the behaviour and personality of women, their perceptions, their confidence level at the realization of their abilities and capabilities. It shatters the matrix of man-made stereotypes into which women so far have been stiflingly cast and carves out the effigy of a new woman who is more palatable and real.

To conclude, it can be rightly said that the study affirmed Shashi Deshpande’s unshaken faith in the acute need for interpersonal relationships. She has succinctly presented her convictions through the themes, characters, narrative techniques and subject matter of her novels. The novel Moving On is a mature work in comparison with the earlier novels of Deshpande chosen for this study. Whereas the novelist’s canvas is domestic field in her earlier novels; in the middle phase of her life, the domestic field goes into the background, making the society come into the foreground. In the novels from the latest phase of Deshpande’s career; there is a radical change in the expectations and aspirations of the protagonists confirming the author’s belief in the changing value system in modern times where the women’s attitude towards sex has become bold and clear. The traditional attitude to ignore sexuality in woman, considering him immoral if she thinks of finding pleasure in sex is changing. Sex is considered by the new woman as a physical need like hunger and thirst. Deshpande envisages a change in the emotional and intellectual quotient of the
women who are able to think independently, live independently and seek sustenance from other things in life apart from marriage, henceforth moving on with their lives with self-realization. She has apparently exposed a new perspective to look at the interpersonal relationships by not negating the family but at the same time celebrating the ‘self’, embracing it to attain harmony between personal and relational issues.