Shashi Deshpande’s Small Remedies as a Representation of the Contradictory Pluralities – An Overview

Prof. Banashankari, Asst Professor of English, Govt First Grade College – C.S.Pura.

Abstract:
Shashi Deshpande’s Small Remedies as a representation of the contradictory pluralities that form the images of women in Indian English literature and as an attempt to string together varied selves of womanhood to accept a multidimensional reality. The study begins by tracing the images of the two central characters in the novel-Savitribai and Leela. The diversity in these images is accounted for in the memories these characters had left behind with the people in their lives. The role of imagination in translating experience into memory is the root of the problem. Shashi Deshpande creates one image only to restore it with the next. Using the analogy of music, she declares that experience alone cannot authenticate. It is one’s own interpretation of experience that forms one’s ‘truths’. The chapter attempts to establish that with Small Remedies Shashi Deshpande has broken away from mono-dimensional representation of women as wounded rebel achievers against a socio-cultural backdrop and has brought into the arena of Indian English literature sole direct images of plurality within womanhood.

Keywords: Shashi Deshpande’s, Small, Remedies, representation, contradictory, pluralities,

Introduction:
Small Remedies, represents the arrangement of a life story within a life story. Madhu Saptarishi, the narrator, has been specially made by a publisher to inscribe a biography on a well-known traditional singer, Savitribai Indorekar, Doyenm of the Gwalior Gharana. Madhu represents her as a young woman who had guided a protected life not only as a child in her maternal home but also as a daughter-in-law in a wealthy Brahmin family. It is her bold self-determining character that creates her try to find her own individuality and escape with a Muslim tabla player to survive in a odd town. Although born in a tradition-bound orthodox Brahmin family, she makes a name for herself as a big orthodox singer. Madhu reports how Savitribai experiences harm when her grandmother asked her to discontinue singing instantly throughout her presentation at a family meeting. Madhu recalls: “In Neemgaon she was ‘the singer woman’ and there was something disparaging about the words, yes, I can see that now, about the way they said them”1
In a society where each family “had its place marked out for it according to religion, caste, money, family background, etc.”2 Savitribai’s father with his unusual habits placed out from society. He was a widower, bringing up a daughter on his possess with a male servant at home. He was alternative in the sense that he would watch no ceremonies or spiritual rites. He could survive the mode he required to lacking open reprimand or condemnation.
But they disapprove of Savitribai’s acts as she absconds with a table player to several further towns and also creates a child from him.

Yet Savitribai’s father-in-law is no dissimilar. He too could obtain away with his mode of life with no one fault or condemnation from society. He had a wife who was a renowned Thumri singer. He approached her frequently and the people about identify this. His selecting a wife from one’s own group and mistress from another was rather tolerable, but for a daughter-in-law hunting a profession in a classical melody was appalling.

The hearsay adjoining Savitribai in Neemgaon was that a Station Director, who had helped her gets several agreements with the radio, was her beloved. He was a usual visitor to her place. In course of time a daughter is born to her from him. As the child develop, Madhu reminds how children would taunt her by calling the Station Director her mama, a euphemism for mother’s lover. As Savitribai was “a woman who had left her husband’s home, she was considered an immoral woman”

She is ashamed of her childish lack of discretion as although connecting her life-story to Madhu, she conceals her cherished relationship with Ghulam Saab and also the reality that she had a daughter from him. This proves Savitribai’s nervousness over her past’s thoughtless acts which she believes a stain on her personality and decency, she maintains herself detached from her illegal daughter Manni, lest it should dull her representation.

In her search for individuality she has developed into very self-centered and domineering for she provides the child her individual character for her own sake, but rejects her when it approaches to surrender her well-deserved name for her only child. She feels affection for the child till her own exciting need get satisfied but when it comes to Munni’s own identity and pleasure; she egoistically keeps her out of her life, withdrawing under the appearance of decency and a good name.

‘For Munro, the self identity that she saw as her possess arrange in the prospect, it was towards that self that she stimulated with reflection an normal appearing woman with an usual family life and a name so ordinary that it covers pages in the telephone directory”

However, in Savitribai’s death Munro had that identity thrust upon her, Shailaja Joshi the only daughter of Savitribai Indorekar this newspaper notification of her mother’s death gave her back the identity she had resisted all her identity.

In a review, Meenakshi Mukherjee remarks “Shashi Deshpande’s philosophy of life as a novelist is that though each individual has to solve his problems of his own, it does not mean that he was to reject all relationships in life. Her protagonists need to be on their own to come to terms with life.” Deshpande’s work is steeped in the authenticity of daily domesticity. Although Shashi Deshpande takes a pride in not writing for a target readership, she admits that her style of writing has contributed to her feeling of being alienated from the more westerner writing that is community in India.
A chronological analysis of Shashi Deshpande’s development as novelist requires a keen study of the narrative technique she has employed in writing her novels. The narrative technique employed by the novelist is gaining importance. Shashi Deshpande overcomes the problem by using a blend of the person and third individual narrative attached with flashback strategy to lend strength and pragmatism to the novel.

In *Small Remedies*, the study reflects dissimilar stages such as the individual, women’s rights motherhood, common violence, etc. it reflects the changing attitudes in the lives of Savitribai, Leela, Munni and Madhu, the narrator herself. The novel is written as a life story within a biography with the writer, Madhu. Madhu was always in a predicament as to how she should tell her own story. Sometimes she feels with a revelation if a biography is a matter of truth-telling. Despite the objective writing, writers own views and perceptions are included in the writing.

It is needless to say that the novelist has undergone a change of outlook regarding the scope of committed writing in literature. It is obvious when the novelist admits that there was a time when she was disdainful of what is called committed writing. She thought that committed writing being message-oriented belittles its artistic value. Now she knows it well that all good quality lettering is publicly devoted writing. She also knows it well that the greatness of an artist in measured by the balance the writer maintains between the values off creation and humanity.

Madhu goes to Bhavanipur to meet Savitribai and to write her biography. There she comes to know how Savitribai successfully obscured Ghulaam Saab and Munni from her life once she was established in the world of music:

“*She clings fiercely instead to her respectability, the respectability she claimed in her second birth as a singer, when, after a gap of two years, she reappeared in public view, wearing at that first public performance the mangalsutra of the married woman...her lover and... her daughter, no longer part of her life*”

Madhu is shown turning over each of these numerous images associated with Savitribai. She is to write her biography and does not know how to accommodate all these facets. The publishers want a story of heroism, Savitribai wants it to be a record of her brilliant career with no space devoted to her life before she become an established singer. Madhu intentionally over what the truth is. She finds that the truth of all these images cannot be denied. It is memory and the mind that excludes one from the other in order to spare itself the pain associated with it.

This pattern is repeated in Leela’s story. She too had many facets to the life she lived. Leela who was Vithal’s wife, Leela who worked to bring up her two young brothers-in-law after Vithal’s death, Leela who married Joe, Leela to whose care Madhu’s father entrusted her in his will, and Leela who was the rebel of the family. Madhu goes over various aspects of the lives of Savitribai and Leela as she grapples with the question of the rendition of truth.

Shashi Deshpande is well aware of the fact that she knows the problems faced by the Indian writers writing in English. She advises them that they should work out their own language. She expresses that she is happy with the present state of affair that the present generation of Indian writing in English who are our contemporary writers and
whose writings seem to be aimed at Indian readers more than western readers. She also expresses her happiness that among the writers East-West conflict has little relevance today.

It also observed that Shashi Deshpande makes seldom use of irony, satire or humour in her novels. Flashes of irony are evident in one or two incidents in a couple of novels. However, they are not incidents in a couple of novelist. She evades the straightforward method of uncomplicated recitation and employs that flash back technique to detain the interest of the reader. She manages to tell the story objectively. Her mind is always conscious of the contemporary society and she presents these contemporary social issues realistically.

Shashi Deshpande’s novels centre round family relationships. She notified her Interviewer: “It’s necessary for women to live within relationships. This is what I have tried to convey in my writing.”36. Outlining the central concerns in her novels she said to another interviewer. Human relationship is which is immensely involved, Individual to Individual and individual to community, these are the main anxiety of artistic writer and, to her; the previous is of huge significance. “My preoccupation is with interpersonal relationships and human emotions”37

She agrees with C. D. Narashimhaish who is of the view that family affiliation is a subject on which heroic after classic can be written. “Undoubtedly my novels are all about family relationships. But...I go beyond that because those relationships which exist within the family relationships which exist within the family are, to an extent, parallel to the relationships which exist between human beings outside.... When I am writing about the family it definitely does not limit my canvas. On the contrary, that is where everything begins.”38

It is in this context that the characters of Savitri Bai and Ghulam Saab, as well as Bai’s Guruji and Ghulam’s granddaughter Hasina attain their unique significance. The tabla maestro, who otherwise remains a shadowy presence hanging around the wings and never occupying the centre stage, still emerges to be a focal point as he is seen, again and again, at performance on some particular taal to the vocal exposition of the singer.

Madhu is shown turning over each of these numerous images associated with Savitribai. She is to write her biography and does not know how to accommodate all these facets. The publishers want a story of heroism, Savitribai wants it to be a record of her brilliant career with no space devoted to her life before she become an established singer. Madhu deliberates over what the truth is. She finds that the truth of all these images cannot be denied. It is memory and the mind that excludes one from the other in order to spare itself the pain associated with it.

This pattern is repeated in Leela’s story. She too had many facets to the life she lived. Leela who was Vithal’s wife, Leela who worked to bring up her two young brothers-in-law after Vithal’s death, Leela who married Joe, Leela to whose care Madhu’s father entrusted her in his will, and Leela who was the rebel of the family. Madhu goes over various aspects of the lives of Savitribai and Leela as she grapples with the question of the rendition of truth.

This quest is not only of purely academic concern for Madhu. It is a part of a healing process for her. She has lost her only son and the safety of the relationship she shared with her husband Som. She relates a nightmare to Som and
with it pours out another incident, a sexual encounter which occurred when she was stressed with grief because of her father’s death. Som cannot handle it and it breaks into a maddening quarrel. Her son Aditya comes in and is sent away. Dumbfounded and shocked. Aditya quits the house and is consequently killed in a bomb blast. The guilt and her exclusion from the experience of death do not allow her to reconcile with her loss. She compares Aditya’s death to Leela’s. Madhu remembers that she was by Leela’s side as she moved towards death and hence could cope with its terror and pain. Aditya’s death was sudden; she was not with him to share his pain. Describing the times she shared with Leela on her deathbed, Madhu records her lack of fear and pain:

“\textit{When finally I wipe my tears and hers as well, we are both relieved. And lighter. We’ve crossed the hurdle of tear-the fear of death, of parting, of loss; we’ve accepted all these things. We are together after this, sharing the experience at her dying. I can come to terms with her death, because I am part of it. I know now that it helps}”\textsuperscript{39}

Madhu’s own life and the lives of Savitribai and Leela each demand a resolution. Savitribai’s biography demands it. Hart wants to know Leela as Madhu knew her. He has the picture of a firebrand communist in his mind but the picture of Leela that Madhu has in her mind is entirely different. Chandru wants to know what is wrong between Som and her and she cannot give an answer because she realizes that such answers cannot be in black or white.

There is always haze of grey where memory builds different shades. This emphasis on blurred outlines and shades of grey is replicated in the example of Hasina, who is Munni’s daughter and the granddaughter of Ghulaam Saab. In the last year of his life Ghulaam Saab spoke to Hasina of Savitribai, they listened to her records and cassettes together as a part of Hasina’s training. Hasina recounts to Madhu the pain Ghulaam Saab suffered when Munni left him for her ‘father’, Savitribai’s first husband who was in Pune. Hasina is not bothered by questions that sprout in.

Savitribai’s first encounter with Madhu is in a remote town, Neemgaon. Savitribai is accompanied by her daughter Munro, and Ghulaam Saab. Madhu befriends Munro. After her father’s death, Madhu leaves Neemgaon and goes to stay with Leela and Joe. Many years later she spots Munro on a bus but Munni refuses to recognize her. Munni had framed a new life for herself, totally rejecting her connections with Savitribai. Accepting Madhu’s presence in her life could open up those connections once again, so Munro blocks her with steely silence and non-recognition.

There has been an overriding academic effort in the past years to classify Shashi Deshpande into the category of feminist writing. With this book Deshpande not only defies any such classification but puts a question mark on this practice of compartmentalization of discourse.

The chapter explores a societal world of several multifaceted relationships. The study also focuses lots of men and women living collectively, Journeying athwart life in their different age groups, divisions and femininity positions. These crowded characters are placed in a cultural scene where many important changes of attitudes, norms and goals give these people curious feeling of grouping in New World. The women are mainly trapped in the course of re-identifying and re-examining their own positions, places and relationship inside specified communal society.
The novelist has presented in her works contemporary Indian women’s seek for identity and redefinitions about the personality and social world, and the relationships that are central to women. Her won efforts as a writer to focus on women’s survival, evils and experiences is consistently indicative of the confrontation of feminist appearances that prevail India in the middle of the twentieth century. She tried to distance herself from women’s lives and point to view through the use of a male narrative voice. She says: “I too had felt that there was a bit very restricted about their happiness and experiences. As a women writer her dilemma was either to give voice to women’s concerns and branded as a woman writer removed from the mainstream of literary scene: or to deny her feminist and writer like a man either with male name or male narrative voice.”

It is not a destructive or confronting attitude to speak from within women’s world. The study focuses the outlooks to present shared actuality as it is practiced by women. To present the humanity of mothers, daughters and wives is also to identify ultimately the fathers, sons and husbands the connection between men and women and between women themselves thus becomes important from the point of social interaction.

The novelist is mainly interested in presenting women’s vision in the conflict of custom and modernity as reproduces in the generation crack and disagreement between. Her young heroines revolt against the conventional way of life, its rituals, ceremonies, and patriarchal principles. Her protagonists like Madhu, Sarita, Indu and others identify the construction of men and women in gendered acts, controlling their individual latent and completeness. They revolt, refuse and search for liberty from the customary rules and way of life by escaping into marriage. Her novels present women pause at some point in their adult roles as wife and mother, and take a long careful book back into the formative periods of childhood and adolescence. Interconnecting these two phases — youth and adulthood, provides a new insight into their lives as women within a particular society.

These women also reconstruct their relation with past and tradition while reforming their relationship with their lives within the parental home. The new relationship of these women seems too based in a mature understanding of women’s roles and responsibilities within their society. It is true that Shashi Deshpande’s women protagonists reconsider the value of the traditional world. Their struggle for fuller self-development and clear articulation is balanced constantly by the awareness of a world. Her portrayal of women’s relations is a process of balancing the modern and the traditional the individuals with their selflessness. The women’s self-respect grows as she manages her duties as a wife and mother. Women’s lives within the society takes them towards a new understanding of the significance of family. Women’s roles do not remain closed and inhibiting and through them they gain fulfillment and self-awareness. Creative self-awareness can be realized from their social relations.

The chapter presents on the hopelessness of ever confining in words the reality about some life. It examines, in retrieving memory, the complexities in encapsulating the life of Savitribai Indorekar, the classical singer of Gwalior Gharana, who is dedicated to music. It is through Madhu’s version that we get to know the dark corners of
Savitribai’s life and the revealing story of Leela. In depicting the efforts of these women for individuality no overt attitudes of feminism are drawn.

A close study of her novels reveals that Shashi Deshpande is a highly sensitive writer who is clearly aware of the male-female imbalance in society. Her male characters conform to the standard feminist description of a middle class husband, who is insensitive, egoistic and sometimes over-ambitious. At the same time most of her women characters suffer from some weakness or other so much that it becomes difficult to label her work.

In a general way the term ‘feminism’ means struggles to support and maintain the insisting for equal rights for women with men. Feminism stands for not only a consciousness of women’s plight but also strength of mind to change the conditions. Shashi Deshpande once asserts: “most of my writing comes out of my own intense and long suppressed feelings about that it is to be a woman in our society. My writing comes out of my consciousness of the conflict between my idea of myself as a human being and the idea that society has of me as a woman. All this makes my writing were clearly woman’s writing.

Conclusion;
Shashi Deshpande’s novels obviously disclose the author’s insight of the inequity between man-woman relationships in the middle class family of our Indian society. It is evident that the novelist tries to correct this imbalance in her novels. However, the abundant trivial characters in the novels bear in silence of admit their destiny with acceptance but do not get any paces for the sake of prestige or reputation in the society she is more humanist than a feminist. Her novels reveal her enormous sympathy for women in our Indian society. Thus the study examines the phenomenon of the independent, modern woman, human relationships, including that of the parent-child relationship, sibling relationship, the psychological problems of spinsterhood and widowhood. The woman is analyzed in the light of the new reality that is the educated and independent woman. The study reveals that the novel reflects the fact that education has been instrumental in bringing significant transformation in upper-middle and middle-class families. Women are now aware of new prospects and horizons. Education is wide-spread among girls. Therefore, the age of marriage has enhanced considerably. Girls have also learnt the art of fusing tradition and modernity to face problems. Thus the study examines how Bim grows to attain her selfhood and also reach her on goals in life.
References:

2) Ibid, p. 139.