

Tribhuvan University

**Traumatic Experience in Shashi Deshpande's *Small Remedies***

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**Letter of Approval**

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## Abstract

This research aims to depict traumatic experience of Madhu, one of the central characters from Shashi Deshpande's *Small Remedies* in which Deshpande brings the suffering of Madhu as the major storyline. The novel brings hardships, struggle and suffering of Madhu under the patriarchal social and cultural structure. Deshpande depicts the traumatic experience of her central character Madhu since she goes through the traumatic events like she was once forced to involve in a physical relation with someone who was the friend of her father and she is raped, and when she reveals it to her husband Som she is abandoned by him. Her trauma is caused by oppressive patriarchal behaviour. Patriarchal assumption regards woman's body as the site of violence for its power exercise. Madhu too becomes the victim of patriarchy and she goes through traumatic experience. So, she wants to get rid of her marital tension. She travels to a town named Bhavanipur to write a biography of a famous classical singer, Savitribai Indorekar. Writing gives her a scope to escape from the trauma. This research uses the theoretical insight of trauma in order to examine the suffering of the female characters in *Small Remedies* since the 'trauma' theory provides a method of interpretation of disorder, distress and destruction caused by internal or external factors. This research concludes that Madhu is a trauma survivor with the help of the theorists like Susan Brison, Cathy Caruth and Kali Tal and deals how she copes with trauma with the theoretical insight of Dominick LaCarpa.

## **Introduction: Trauma and its Placement in the Character**

*Small Remedies* brings the suffering of its central character Madhu as the major storyline in the novel. The novel brings hardships, struggle and suffering of Madhu under the patriarchal social and cultural structure. She has to face rape in the past and when she forwards the reality of her life with her husband Som, she is abandoned by him. In this sense, a rape victim is again victimized in the accusation of adultery by the patriarchy which makes her traumatized throughout life. Madhu presents the dreadful but the mirror like picture of the modern India where women have been facing the gender discrimination. She copes with reality but in turn reality tortures her. Her all efforts to make a plan for happy life but all those efforts give only the painful situation to her. She has to undergo through trauma brought by patriarchal values inherent in contemporary Indian society. The novel shows the back and front factors in the life of an Indian woman caused by patriarchal discrimination.

Deshpande's women characters signify the changing time with the change in their private lives. Shashi Deshpande is one of most important contemporary women novelists of India. Her novels are a veritable mirror of the situations of urban middle-class Indian women and the problem existing in the lives of the women. Deshpande is a master writer in the way she articulates human emotions, the fears, and feelings experiences by women. She has given a true picture of the society and not a biased one, although she often denies being a feminist in her writings. Yet she admits that in personal life. Madhu, a writer, lost her one of the sons, Attitude to the aftermath of the 1992, Ayodhya Babri Masjid bombing to recover, she travels to a town Bhavanipur to write a biography of a famous classical singer, Savitribai Indorekar.

Madhu wants to get rid of her marital tension; she travels to a town named Bhavanipur to write a biography of a famous classical singer, Savitribai Indorekar,

and she also makes remedies to go ahead in her life. Writing gives her a scope to escape from the tension in her marriage and to identify herself. And also other women characters show the brevity in their one ways. Among the characters one is Savitribai and other is Leela. It has three main women characters, Madhu is protagonist and the story is exposed through her writing of biography. This novel holds a mirror to the social transitions occurring in Indian society. Madhu is an educated woman who left her home to solve her problem on her own. She suffers from traumatic event which is the cause of sexual abuse and death also. Women are victims of the society. Society makes the rules which are different to men and women. Men commit the mistakes however, why women are always victimized under those crimes? Despande depicts the traumatic experience of her central character Madhu since she goes through the traumatic events like she was once forced to involve in a physical relation with someone who was the friend of her father and she is raped, and when she reveals it to her husband Som she is abandoned by him. Likewise, her son was killed in Ayodhya Babri Masjid bombing causing her extra mental and physical torture as Madhu suffers from both physical and mental trauma throughout her life.

This research aims to use the theoretical insight of trauma in order to examine the suffering of the female characters in *Small Remedies*. The term 'trauma' provides a method of interpretation of disorder, distress and destruction caused by psychological repression. It locates that the effect of an event may be dispersed and manifested in many forms not obviously associated with the events, scars on a social body and its compulsive repeated actions. The plights and suffering of Madhu could be studied through the perspective of trauma theory.

Trauma is an emotional shock, pains and suffering. Trauma refers to the action shown by the abnormal mind to the body. The stress to the mind occurs due to various

causes. If there are external causes like social, cultural or external factors that cause the torture or stress, the trauma is understood as Cultural Trauma. In its most general definition trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events.

And even the gender trauma has the external factors as the cause of trauma, it also belongs to the cultural and historical trauma. Cultural trauma seeks the cause of trauma as the external factors or the certain social, cultural or historical incidents or events that make the victim traumatized. Likewise, for many contemporary feminist theorists, the body is the site of imagination, representation, and emotions through which our reality, including our sense of self is constructed. This view of the body provides a compelling framework for analyzing trauma, such as that is associated with sexual assault, as constituting the collapse of one's reality and the destruction of one's personal identity.

Many critics have analyzed Shashi Deshpande's work differently. Mohit K. Ray says, "Novel *Small Remedies* reaffirms Shashi Deshpande as one of the leading fiction writers in India" (136). Shashi Deshpande is the Indian writer. She is the leading fiction writer in a sense that she basically writes about women. She raises voices about Indian women who are always dominated in society. As writer, She seems failure with Indian women's typical problems. She pictures the mirror of social transition through writing of fiction.

Another literary critic Kavita Sony Sharma views this novel as 'women in search of their identities' who dare to live their dreams and fulfil their ambition. She states, "An array of human emotions with sensitivity and subtlety. Her style of writing is simple and see effectively explores identity, gender and violence in *Small Remedies*" (20). Thus, it is clear that Deshpande's writing is simple and



straightforward with the issues of women under the discriminatory patriarchal Indian society.

Deshpande has successfully captured in her writing the intricate emotions and the dilemmas and conflicts of women. Through the characters of Madhu she presents the picture of an extremely courageous woman who faces the problem of her life boldly and also manages to come out of them. In this connection, another critic Siddhartha Sharma writes:

The present book, seeks to study the feminist perspective in Shashi Deshpande's novel. It reveals Deshpande's sincerity and ability in voicing. The concerns of the urban educated middle-class woman trapped between tradition and modernity, her sensitive heroines are fully conscious of being victims of gross gender discrimination prevalent in a conservative male dominated society. (125)

Deshpande emphasizes that women's strength lies in their acknowledgement of their desires not only sexual but creative as well. She gives an intimate insight into the psyche of the middle- class Indian women who feel oppressed and hemmed in by their patriarchal socialization.

From these reviews it is clear that Deshpande depicts the main character Madhu as a picture of women in male dominated traditional society which was always haunted by fear. She is the victim of gender discrimination. She suffers a lot of pains in her life. Critics have mentioned this novel as structural strong and simple and it effectively explores the identity psychological consequences of violence, of death and destruction.

Likewise, some of the critics have focused on the existential aspects of the female characters from the novel *Small Remedies*. In this connection, Yaul Usha writes:

Deshpande's creative talent and accomplishment have established her credentials as a worthy writer. Her protagonists are modern, educated young women, crushed under the weight of a male-dominated and tradition-bound society. They are aware of oppression in society when they want to establish their own identity and suffer a lot. In *Small Remedies* Shashi Deshpande makes an honest and novel attempt to trace the position of women in the 21st century. The female protagonists move from feminine consciousness to the self-affirmation.

(365)

For Usha, there is strong sense of existentialism or quest for female self in the novel, *Small Remedies*. It explores the lives of three women, one is obsessed with music, second one a passionate believer in communism and the third one with writing. These three women take up their fight alone. Savitribai Indorekar's rebellious act to break away from her family for her love of music is not an isolated, whimsical, individual decision.

While establishing various concerns of women, the novel transcends personal borders and becomes a part of the key social and political agendas undertaken by the late nineteenth century women such as Pandita Ramabai, Anandibai Joshi, Kashibai Kanetkar, Tarabai Shinde etc. who had the courage to stand up against the oppressive social regime. The protagonist-biographer Madhu exercises her choices, rejects her husband's essentialist approach and reconstructs her 'self.' Like Bai, Leela, another major woman character too goes beyond the acceptable boundaries set for women,

though less spectacularly. Yaul Usha further mentions, “Shashi Deshpande has considerable success in portraying woman as protagonist in plots cantered round issues such as female marginalization, marital discord, sexual suppression, alienation and the search for self” (365). Thus, feminist issue is major concern of Deshpande's writings.

Most of the critics have focused on various aspects of the novel through different perspectives. However, no one has traced the reasons behind Madhu's trauma which is caused by sexual abuse and victimization at the beginning. Later, in her marital life she is tortured by the discriminating gender gaze inherent in patriarchal society since her husband Som abandons her when she shares her past traumatic experience. In this sense, the trauma faced by Madhu is gender trauma caused by patriarchal discrimination between males and females by shaping different discriminatory gender roles, ethics and morality.

This research work tries to show the back and front factors in the life of an Indian woman caused by trauma. Trauma is the condition of horrendous event. The traumatic experience faced by Madhu in *Small Remedies* too is related with her body and males' patriarchal assumptions regarding purity and chastity of female body. Madhu cannot forget the sexual violence and abuse throughout her life which leads her to traumatic feelings.

### **Trauma and Its Cultural Dimension**

Trauma refers to the experience of shock, suffering and hurt of individual due to the various reasons. In this sense, it is the experience of pains and tortures both physically and mentally. Trauma is the result of psychological or physical torture, disturbance, unexpected and sudden emotional shock. *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines trauma as "a serious injury or shock to the body as from

violence or an accident" and relating to psychiatry, the dictionary defines trauma as "an emotional wound or shock that creates substantial lasting damage to the psychological development of a person" (1439).

Trauma theory is rooted on psychiatry and mediclinical sectors. The mediclinical aspect of trauma has only focused on the psychological aspects of trauma. In psychological trauma, it is defined as extremely unpleasant injury which causes us to feel upset, anxious shocked normally. Cathy Caruth in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* says:

The term trauma acquired a more psychological meaning when it was employed by J. M. Charcot, Pierro Janet, Alfred Binet, Mortin Prince, Joshef Bseuer, Sigmund Freud, and other turn-of-the century figures to describe the wounding of the mind brought about by sudden, unexpected, emotional shock. The emphasis began to fall on the hysterical shattering of the personality consequent on a situation of extreme terror or fright. (3-4)

Trauma theory intersects with other critical vocabularies which problematize representation and attempt to define its limits. Trauma brings the after-effects of the emotional upheavals. It leaves catastrophic effect in the victim and recovery from this requires a holistic and meaningful emotional and physical development of a person.

Now, trauma is not limited within its psychological dimensions. Rather it has crossed the personal level and has reached in border arena. If the victim has an external reason behind his/her suffering, the trauma belongs to the historical or cultural category. Due to the external factors the trauma survival goes through the loss of meaning of life. Mirand Alcock in "Refugee Trauma -The Assault on Meaning" writes about the loss of home, culture, family status and its role toward the sense of

confusion and purposeless as well as traumatic circumstances. He says, “The meaning of life can seem to disappear with loss of home, culture, family and status. This can be lead to a sense of confusion and purposeless, in which inner resources become dislocated or seem lost” (191). The memory of Susie gives the traumatic impact to the family as she is the loved one of the family. Each members of the family are entangled within her memory.

Alcock further mentions, "The price of survival can exacerbate loss of inner meaning and feelings of depletion and emptiness. People can be caught up in a cycle of repetition that makes it difficult to recover from those losses and to re-establish a life that has vitality, purpose and meaning” (292). Memory, remembrance of past or nostalgic views about the past is another cause of traumatic circumstance. Role of memory in the course of trauma is clearly discussed by the trauma theorists. Charley, protagonist, too is haunted by the memories of the past. About the role of memory, Duncan Bell writes:

At a very general level memory refers to the process or faculty whereby events or impressions from the past are recollected and preserved . . . although memory is related integrally to history, most contributors to the debates over memory (and most, although not all of the contributors to this book) stress that it is also in some sense of separable from it, even if the exact boundaries between these two are elusive. (2)

Memory for Bell is the process of faculty which recollected the past events, happening, histories. It is nostalgic because it recollected the things which are lost in present while memory victim is remembering.

About revealing the trauma for the betterment Pierre Janet mentions, "The teller must not only know how to (narrate the event) but must also know how to associate the happening" (663). Janet talks about retelling the trauma with the concern with listeners' reaction, "but also an inward reaction through the words we address to ourselves, and through the putting of this recital in its place as one of the chapters in our personal history" (663). According to Janet a trauma victim can overcome the circumstance keeping oneself on his/her rational position. It's the position of self-mastery, where the victim can understand himself through various experiences.

For many writers, writing becomes a right way to admit their inner problems and release those entire unspoken unconscious that remain in them. LaCapra writes, "I see working through as a desirable process. In working through, the person tries to gain critical distance on a problem and to distinguish between past, present and future" (1430).

LaCapra not only talks the process of 'working through' he also mentions how 'acting out' comes together with it. He says, "Acting out is a process but a repetitive one. It is a process whereby the past, or the experience of the other, is repeated as if it were fully enacted, fully internalized" (148). Unlike in the process of working through, in acting out the victims repetitively remembers his past. There is not the critical distance with past. A complete trauma narrative as a means of coping with it goes through the bend of 'working through' and 'acting out.'

About the process of coping with trauma and self mastery it is relevant to deal with LaCapra's notion of the reformatory part of trauma. For LaCapra, trauma narration goes through two processes the 'acting out' and 'working through.' His description about acting-out and working-through as two processes by which persons and societies deal with traumatic historical pasts. La Capra says, "Acting out is related

to repetition, and even the repetition compulsion . . ." (142) and "working through is the ability to undertake it . . ." (144).

LaCapra's describes about acting-out and working-through as two processes by which persons and societies deal with traumatic historical pasts. LaCapra associates acting-out with a repetition compulsion, repeating the trauma and healing power to wound, and working-through with the generation of alternate relations between people that counter those destroyed by trauma and that continue to be threatened by acting-out. Acting out is a process where traumatized victims commit actions that somehow repeat negative emotions/actions associated with trauma and working-through counters this process.

Similarly, Susan J. Brison about trauma in her book *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self*, writes, "Nevertheless, the trauma survivor must find empathic listeners in order to carry on. Piecing together a shattered self requires a process of remembering and working through in which speech and affect converge in a trauma narrative" (20). Brison talks about the trauma narration by trauma survivor. For this purpose the speaker finds listener to carry on the survivors experiences. The process of remembering past and working goes together. It is therefore narratives are the basic ingredient of autobiographical memory. The process of re-establishing a sense of coherence after trauma relies on the capacity for coherent narration. The latter is often not possible with traumatic experiences.

Similarly, many rape narratives written by the rape victim/survivors as mentioned by Susan J. Brison in "Violence and the Remaking of a Self" must find empathic listeners through writings in order to carry on. Piecing together a shattered self requires a process of remembering and working through in which speech and affect converge in a trauma narrative. He emphasizes that this does not mean the

simple abandoning of an event, and further, that even if a victim has worked through their problem, further work may be required. Working through and acting out should not be considered binary opposed. Rather, La Capra asserts, they are distinct.

LaCapra's discussion of identity, again, ties into Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity by emphasizing the ways in which trauma are internalized into one's identity.

In this sense, the term 'trauma' provides a method of interpretation of disorder, distress and destruction aroused by the psychological repression. It locates that the effect of an event may be dispersed and manifested in many forms not obviously associated with the events, scars on a social body and its compulsive repeated actions. Moreover, trauma refers to the action shown by the abnormal mind to the body. The stress to the mind occurs due to various causes. If there are external causes like social, cultural or external factors that cause the torture or stress, the trauma is understood as Cultural or Historical trauma. The gender trauma is caused due to the gender discrimination, sexual violence and patriarchal domination upon females. It too belongs to cultural trauma since the cause of the trauma is external.

Cultural trauma seeks the cause of trauma as the external factors or the certain social, cultural or historical incidents or events make the victim traumatic. Cathy Caruth states that trauma as the limit of knowledge is a continuation of the Yale project. In its most general definition trauma describes an overwhelming experience of "sudden of catastrophic events, in which the responses to the event occurs in the after delayed and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (181).

For many contemporary feminist theorists, the body is the site of imagination, representation, and emotions through which our reality, including our sense of self, is constructed. This view of the body provides a compelling framework for analyzing



trauma, such as that associated with sexual assault, as constituting the collapse of one's reality and the destruction of one's personal identity. One such analysis can be found, for instance, in Susan Brison's gripping narrative of her own experience as a survivor of rape trauma. Constance L. Mui writes about gender trauma with references of Brison:

"Observing that she was no longer the same person she had been prior to the assault, Brison describes this devastating loss of self in terms of many psychological responses, including the inability to construct an ongoing narrative, an altered sense of autonomy and desire, the estrangement from her own body, as well as intense episodes of depression, fear, and numbness" (153).

In the arena of cultural trauma, the gender trauma which deals with the body of female as well as gender exploitation, harassment and rape towards the women in male dominant society as the cause of traumatic experiences.

In *Small Remedies*, there are immense possibilities to deal with the references of gender trauma in specific and cultural trauma in general because the gender roles and the subordinate gender position of author as a gender victim leads her to the narrativization of trauma. The experience of seduction gives her sense of loss of her purity and innocence. The psychological impact and mental torture leads her to frustration and depression and extreme traumatic experiences. In this sense, the gender role is one of the prominent causes of her traumatic experiences.

The trauma victim as mentioned by Dominik LaCarpa goes through two stages in their coping with it as 'working through' and 'acting out.' Worst experience of seduction could be dealt with experience of Brison as she depicts her painful experience of rape as a devastating "disintegration of the self" (33). The experiences

of disintegration of the self along with the assault, harassment and rape fill up the novel. Similar descriptions of the “shattering” or “fragmentation” of the self can be found in numerous case studies of rape victims, which have led one team of researchers to consider rape as Herman says “ultimate violation of the self” (74). It is the question on the self and self dignity while the survivor of rape trauma faces after the experience. The relation between self and rape trauma even threatens the life of survivor.

The loss might have different varieties. Any way loss victimized the people. The sense of loss plays the vital role to drag the experience to the destruction. Keeping LaCarpa's absence and loss into the consideration some of the critics have focused upon the trauma of victim. Cathy Caruth, who proposes that those suffering from trauma “carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess” (5). Analysis of female body is also to be paid attention for the proper study of gender trauma.

The gender trauma which deals with the body of female as well as gender exploitation, harassment and rape towards the women in male dominant society as the cause of traumatic experiences. In this sense, gender discrimination regarding female's body and sexuality is one of the major causes for gender trauma. Thus, keeping these insights of cultural/historical trauma in general and gender in specific, this research observes the novel *Small Remedies* through the perspective of trauma in general in the upcoming sections.

### **Trauma Faced by Madhu in Deshpande's *Small Remedies***

*Small Remedies* is regarded as one of the path breaking novels of Shashi Deshpande that centres on the issues of plights, suffering and the courage of Indian women to wrestle against patriarchal domination even in the traumatic situation in her

life. Within the courage and struggle to resist against the patriarchal domination, her female characters undergo through gender traumatic situation since the basic cause of their torture and suffering is the exploitative nature of patriarchal society, its gender hierarchy and gender discrimination inherent in Indian society. In this sense, the female characters from *Small Remedies* go through the cultural trauma in general and gender trauma in particular.

The novel explores the traumatic situation of the women in Indian society by revealing the discriminating patriarchal gaze towards married Indian women. The female characters are somehow courageous to wrestle against the previous gender discriminatory rules and regulations. However, they have to compensate their efforts by experiencing gender traumatic lives. It is due to their refusal to innocence of infidelity which has been hurting male ego. The females of *Small Remedies* though face gender traumatic situation somehow challenge the patriarchal domination and assumptions. The novel, in this sense, depicts the female who tries to blur traditional gender identity in one hand. Likewise, on the other hand, they have to go through traumatic experience in their lives. It shows the tendency of society to look towards the female on the basis of sex as the ultimate causes of the suffering of women in Indian society. This novel shows how the women suffer from traumatic events associated with their sexuality and patriarchal views regarding it.

In this sense, gender traumatic experience is the major issues in the novel *Small Remedies*. The cause of gender trauma is gender discrimination, sexual abuse and violence of sex. The central character Madhu is the main example who goes through gender trauma both in her marital and non-marital lives. Behind her trauma, patriarchal attitude of Indian society towards women is the major cause. Her traumatic experience is caused by her relationship with her husband and family. Her trauma is

directly started while her husband mistreats her regarding her virginity. The suffering, struggle and torture of Madhu mark her as a traumatic character which is closely linked with gender issues.

Madhu is a motherless child. She grew up with her father. At a younger age, she loses her father too. She always wants her mother's love and affection. She has idealized it through pictures. But she slowly "learns that the women around her do not confirm to white clad, sacrificing and sobbing mother of the movie" (183). She is helped by Leela, her aunt and Joe, Leela's husband. Madhu completes her graduation and takes up a job with a magazine *City Views*. She settles in a room offered by her colleague Hamidbhai. Joe's son Tony and his friends Chandru and Som usually visit there in weakened where Madhu also lives. Madhu and Som become closer each other. They have fallen in love and get married. She enjoys the new relationship with her husband. Soon she is pregnant and gives birth to a boy, Adit. She feels that "A child's birth is a rebirth for a woman; it is like becoming a part of the world once again . . . from death you return to life, not just the new life you've produced, but your own life, renewed given back to you" (88-89).

Madhu has been happy for a few years. Adit dies in a bomb blast that takes place in a bus boarded by him. She does not believe his death till some days. She goes out every day and tries to find him on the roads. She searches for him and says that his death is "not an event, it's an end. It's like nuclear devastation, there is nothing left. Som and I are moving through the rubble of our devastated life, searching for something, for any bits and pieces of our past. But there's nothing" (211). She cries for her loss of identity with the death of her only son. She says, "How long will I live this way? And what for, Oh God, what for?" (306). She plans to go to Savitribhai, who is her friend. Finally she visits to Bhavanipur to write Savitribhai's biography.

Here in the novel, Deshpande expresses how the women are traumatized by male dominated society. Madhu the protagonist suffers from trauma by means of the truth of her past life event which incidentally occurs in her life. In general she is not a participant in premarital sexual activities. She is just a victim of the activities of sex. Whatever man does is not questioned but if a woman does anything she has to bear the consequences alone even after many years. In this sense, Madhu is also not left out of it after many years after marriage till her son was seventeen. Madhu's husband Som is upset with revelation of her only act of sex with her father's friend when she was a child.

However, Som is stubborn to make Madhu accept her guilt regarding the act of sex before marriage when she was a child as adultery. Before marriage, Som also had a full-fledged girlfriend with whom he had enjoyed sex but he cannot accept a single act of sex from his wife. In a male dominated society like India where women have been treated like a foot matters from centuries. In this sense, Deshpande makes a novel attempt to trace the position of women in twenty first century in Indian society where women have been victimized by the discriminatory criteria regarding female's chastity and purity. Patriarchal society regards women's body and sexuality as the honor of family and it causes the gender violence. In this connection, Menon and Bhasin write, "So powerful and general was the belief that safeguarding a woman's honour is essential to upholding male and community honour that a whole new order of violence came into play, by men against their own kinswomen; and by women against their own daughters or sisters and their own selves" (44).

The protagonist of the novel Madhu suffers from trauma after the death of her only son Adit in Babri Masjid bomb accident which actually happens due to the root cause of her past event of sex when she was only fifteen. Sigmund Freud uses the

term trauma to describe a painful event not inflicted to the body but to the mind. After traumatic events Madhu faced the terrible conditions. She doesn't want to come out of that situation.

The experience of trauma repeats itself exactly and unremittingly through the unknowing acts of survivor and against his will. Trauma is an event which breaks through the protesting shield and overwhelms existing defences against anxieties. Repetitive actions make the trauma problematic. Trauma is complex form of memory: the traumatic incident may be an accurate one but it is beyond the conscious recall and control of the human beings. The cause of trauma is an event or situation that causes great distress and disruption of human psyche. Madhu suffers from trauma mostly due to gender. She is traumatized because of her past incidence which she told to her husband. She suffers from the trauma of gender and being a woman she has to face that situation which leads to the traumatic situation and of course after knowing her traumatic situation every hearts may feel pity.

Gender trauma is the part of cultural and historical trauma. Gender trauma exists in, with in psychological trauma also. Madhu's life heads towards self-destruction. The following lines capture how traumatically Madhu is degraded:

They got married as soon as she was eighteen. There was, of course enormous opposition to the marriage from her family. Not only was my father much older- nearly fifteen years older than her –he was not a Brahmin. Nevertheless, they got married. A year later she had a child and in a few months she was dead. It was TB, galloping TB as they called it then, which killed her within six months. This is the brief story of my parent's marriage of their relationship. Or rather, this is all that I know of it. (171)

Madhu feels helpless and vulnerable from her childhood. She feels more frightened and helpless due to trauma. The death of her mother is the fact that she has to be traumatized. Death of her mother is the memory of her past. Surely, a mother's death is a momentous event in a child's life. She always wants to get the love from her mother. But her mother died when she was only of few months. So Madhu is haunted by her past memory. Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain.

In this novel, Madhu was once involved in a physical relation with someone and when she reveals it to her husband Som, the tension begins in their marital relation. Actually, Madhu is only the victim but not a participant. If the male would have been in a relation with a female then it won't be serious matter. If the same act is performed by a woman then it is violation of the "sacramental" (12) union called marriage. In India women are still expected to be a mother goddess like Sita or Savitri (13). It is due to the different gender codes and conducts between males and females in Indian society.

In Indian society, men control the society and the means of social values as well as rules and regulations for women. In that sense, the norms and values are definitely against of women. Women are forced to accept such social rules. They are always suppressed of their voice in the sense that women are traumatized by gender trauma which it closely linked with men and women relation. Madhu's traumatic experience too is caused by unequal gender relations. She had a premarital sex at the age of sixteen. Regarding her age it is actually a child abuse. However, while she shares the incident with her husband, as she narrates, "It is man's death that I'm speaking to Som, the suicide, the horror" (262). The abuser had committed suicide as Madhu narrates, "He slept with me, I was only fifteen then. He-I don't think he meant it, but it-it happened. And that's why he-that's why he died. He killed himself because

of what he did to me” (162). However, while Madhu shares the incident it leads to the family disaster. She further says:

This is what I’m speaking of to Som, this is what I’m sharing with him. But it’s the single act of sex that Som holds on to, it’s this fact that he can’t let go of, as if it’s been welded into his palm. Purity chastity an intact hymen- these are the things Som is thinking of these are the truths that matter. I know this when I see his face, when I feel the hurting grip of his hand, when he says, ‘Tell me, go on, go on.’  
(262)

Thus, with the memory of the seducer’s suicide, Madhu shares with her husband that he has slept with her. However, the girl is innocent and not aware about the proper sex. From her narration it is clear that she had been seduced and since she is only fifteen years old and the seducer is her father’s friend the incident could be regarded as rape through the moral and legal perspectives.

However, Madhu’s husband Som does not regard it as the crime of the seducer rather questions on the morality of Madhu. Madhu reads the mentality of her husband while she says about her past as “Purity chastity an intact hymen- these are the things Som is thinking of these are the truths that matter” (262). Som further forces her to reveal more about the event as he says, “Tell me, go on, go on” (262). Madhu is a sex victim since she is not much aware about the event. She further narrates that she is not aware about the incident, “Go on with what? There’s nothing else as far as I’m concerned. The memories are vague, confused, they come to me in insubstantial wisps-the smell of man’s clothes, the roughness of his hand, of his cheek” (262). Madhu has very unclear images of the act since it has been long years ago and she was immature to experience the sex like a grown up woman. Thus, she is not mentally



or physically attached with her past single experience of sex. It has become minor memory for her. However, Som does regard it as a minor act rather he forces her reveal more.

In this connection, Madhu narrates, “But Som wants facts, hard facts. How often had this happened, how long had it gone on? Tell me, tell me” (262). Madhu’s story suggests that she is victim of sexual abuse. Though she is able to cope with her past her husband further tortures her by making her reveal it and by regarding her as a characterless woman. She clarifies the event as, “Only once. No, never again. No, never before, either” (263). However, Som forces her to reveal much about her premarital sex. He cannot believe Madhu as the male of patriarchal Indian society. Rather gives tortures to her. In this connection Madhu narrates, “Som cannot believe me. He won’t believe there is nothing more to tell. He thinks I’m holding back. When I say it’s all very vague, he thinks I’m evading him, when I tell him I’d forgotten about it, he goes rigid with disbelief and anger. But it is true” (263). The experience of Madhu marks that she is the victim of patriarchal assumptions of female purity and chastity in Indian society.

After this single incident, Madhu had to go through a lot of big events in her life like, “father’s illness,” “his departure to Bombay and his surgery,” and “his death” (263). So, the incident of seduction no longer remains as the major torture in her life. In this connection she narrates, ‘All the other happenings whirled round this central fact of my father’s death’ (263). Thus, she has a lot of traumatic incidents in her life. However, her husband Som only focuses on her sexual act since he regards it as the major incidents for female in Indian society. Later, she is tortured more by her husband than other past events in her life.

In this sense, Deshpande is successful to show how the female in Indian society has adopted the trauma made by males. Women are always haunting by memory of that incident which is committed to male not a female. Women are only the victim not participant. In that time Madhu doesn't know about sex, she has been forced to involve in sex then question arises Madhu commits the mistake or not? Women in the present society are always dominated by men in all spheres. Our society has been so conditioned to categorize women as immoral on the slightest deviation on their part from the normal course of behavior.

Thus, Madhu is a victim not only of the double standards of society but of her own innocence. Due to this innocence nature of women, Madhu sacrifices to Babu at her teenage and later discloses this to Som. However, patriarchal domination makes her traumatized by questioning upon her chastity, and purity. It cannot enjoy her sexuality. Thus, gender prevalence makes her a traumatic female figure. The misbehaviour of Som toward Madhu is one form of gender violence existed in Indian society. The patriarchal Indian society promotes the gender violence in many forms.

Likewise, women too should go through the domestic violence even by their own nearest relatives like fathers, brothers and husband. The nearest relatives torture the women basically raising the issues of sexuality. It exists in social and cultural practice. In Indian society, patriarchy determines the gender roles and way of life of women. The patriarchal ideology determines the women's criteria of women's purity and chastity. If there is some sort of mistake is committed by a woman knowingly or unknowingly, that woman should go through a lot of gender tortures. The notion of patriarchy makes them suffered and traumatized.

Madhu is one of the trauma victims due to the discriminatory gender relation between male and female. She becomes trauma victim while her husband tortures her

questioning upon her chastity and purity. Following narration of Madhu clarifies her as trauma victim:

After all these days, after so many months, suddenly it's time for me to confront the chaos, to make sense of it, to speak of it, to convert the fractured images, the vague shapes and sounds into the coherent word pattern. Certain images still escape me, they whirl around in a dark, chaotic maelstrom. The final moments of madness between Som and me, when I driven to desperation by the wildness of a man I could no longer recognize, cried out loudly. The pain and darkness in my head, the thudding sound—was it Som banging my head against the wall, or was I doing it myself. (298)

The above extract exhibits the domestic gender violence faced by Madhu. While she reveals her simple past, she has to face the gender discrimination. It tortures her mentally and physically. There is extreme suffering has been faced by Madhu.

She further narrates, “I can only remember the sudden silence, the cessation of all sound, the emptiness in my head that only moments ago had been full of pain and darkness” ” (67) marks that Madhu has gone through extreme gender traumatic experience. Madhu is not tortured only by the domestic violence but also by the loss of her son. Madhu becomes senseless after her son Adit's death. In the absence of her son she feels helplessness full of pain and darkness around her. In this sense, Madhu narrates in the novel that how the relationship was with her husband after the death of their son. In this sense, Madhu narrates Som and her relation:

The final moments of madness between Som and me when I driven to desperation by the wildness of a man. I could no longer recognize, cried out loudly—was it Som banging my head against the wall, or was

I doing it to myself? And then Adit's face, his anguished face, his panicked cries. And who was it who cried out, 'Go away, Adit'?'  
(298).

Madhu faces the terrible condition after death of her son. She suffers mentally as well as physically too. Som does not have any feeling of that situation knowingly and unknowingly they have committed mistake. It only happens in gender discrimination of society. Som always shouts and blames Madhu for sexual act which happens when she was a child. And here all events are affected by gender. Madhu suffers from anxieties of trauma.

When Madhu revealed her past life to Som, he did not trust her. Here, Deshpande shows the mirror of Indian society where the position of man is superior to woman. Som says again and again Madhu about the truth of her past life although she has already told about the true facts. There is no any truth but Som believes that the truth is somewhere with Madhu. Som imagines Madhu to be the enemy obstructing him. Som dismisses the truth of their life together, with love, friendship parents of a beloved son. Before marriage she lives in her father and a servant Babu.

Madhu tells Babu is the domestic authority. He looks home and cleans, but he is not mother. Madhu always imagine of her mother image and wants to full family of her. But she does not get. After her father's death Babu disappears. Madhu leaves for her aunt Leela. After her father's death there's only Leela and Joe. Madhu enters their home but she never becomes a part of the family. She always thinks full family but she does not get that type of family she belongs. Later, it's only when she gets the family when she marries Som. So, she tells everything of her life to Som but Som does not see her good things. These all events turn into form of trauma. She suffers physically as well as mentally. She is badly haunted by those events which have been

done by a man. However, she narrates it which is important since it captures the victim's voice.

Finally, Madhu writes the biography of Savitribai connecting her own past bitter experience as if she is finding some listeners about her sufferings. It is her revelation of her own trauma. Trauma victim can overcome the circumstance keeping oneself on his/her rational position. It's the position of self-mastery, where the victim can understand himself through various experiences. Madhu seems very much rational in narration her trauma that is why she has perfectly blended her own story, Lila's story and Savitribai's story. However, all these three stories depict various types of sufferings faced by women in Indian society.

Madu's effort to write a book is a process of coping with her trauma. Authors write book to cope with the critical phase of life is no more than a result of working through the trauma. The 'working through' is only possible in post traumatic phase while the survival tries to contextualize the past in present. Madhu not only distinguishes her past and present through her narration but also keeps her critical distance with the past traumatic experience in the novel. Her effort of working through trauma in post traumatic situation is a means to cope with it or in narrating his past suffering he feels solace.

### **Conclusion: Gender Discrimination in Society Leads to Gender Trauma**

Madhu, the central character from *Small Remedies*, has gone through the gender traumatic experienced throughout her live. She has been living as the trauma survivor since the novel centres on the issues of her plights, suffering and the courage to cope with it. She undergoes gender traumatic situation since the basic cause of her torture and suffering is the exploitative nature of patriarchal society, its gender hierarchy and discrimination inherent in Indian society.

There is the discriminating patriarchal gaze upon the girls and women in Indian society that do not let women practise full of their potentiality in one hand. On the other hand, the female characters should always justify their chastity and purity for their nearest males regarding their bodies and sexuality. Madhu's suffering is based on similar discriminatory criteria for chastity and purity designed by patriarchal society different for both males and females. She is abandoned by her husband.

Madhu, has to face the domestic violence, lost her only son. However, she is able to cope with her trauma by writing it or narrating to the audiences. Madhu is the main example who goes through gender trauma both in her marital and non-marital lives. Behind her trauma, patriarchal attitude of Indian society towards women is the major cause. Her traumatic experience is caused by her relationship with her husband and family. Her trauma directly starts while her husband mistreats her regarding her virginity.

Later while Madhu is abandoned by her husband after she reveals past bitter experience of childhood sexual abuse and after her son's death she plans to write a book of Savitribai connecting her own traumatic experience. It is Lata's and Hari's affection towards her that helps to overcome grief and pains. Soon she gets involved with her new family world. Bai's stroke and Hari's accident forced her to confront her own grief. She lets herself open up to other people's grief and pains. In such situation, Kisa Gotami's tale is just like a healing medicine for her. Now, gradually she accepts the truth of her son Adit's death. She goes through gender trauma. All her sufferings are caused basically by the patriarchal assumptions of Indian society.

However, as a trauma survivor she goes through the process of acting out and working through in order to cope with it. She writes the biography of Savitribai connecting her own past bitter experience as if she is finding some listeners about her

sufferings. It is her revelation of her trauma. Thus, by writing or narrating her story she is able to overcome the circumstance keeping her rational position. She perfectly blends her own story, Lila's story and Savitribai's story. However, all these three stories depict various types of sufferings faced by women in Indian society. In this sense, her effort to write a book is a means of working through her trauma as authors write book to cope with the critical phase of life.

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