Her Story, Our Story and On the Swing: Short Stories and a Novella
Vibhavari Shirurkar

Translated from Marathi by **Yashodhara Deshpande Maitra**

Extracts:

From *Empty Vessels*

I painted myself a victim of misunderstandings' and so drew the veil over my past. I deluded both myself, as well as Bhaiyyasaheb. But I did not understand at the time that this was no ordinary person. He was a rascal who intended to cheat me! I chose not to see this and fell into the trap. . . . '

Bhaiyyasaheb is a scoundrel.' people said, in a voice loud enough for me to hear. Sometimes they would shout after our car passed.' Great! Another new woman!' But my shameless heart ignored the voice of reason. I did wonder why people talked like this, but although I could sense the answer, I suppressed it . . .

Oh, how I had used and misused words like 'father' and 'brother' to justify my behaviour. Did I really consider him like a father or a brother? . . .

One day I broached the topic. 'Now all we need is a priest to recite the mantras and shower blessings on us. Let us arrange that.' [pp 73, 74, 76]

From *On the Swing*

'Virag, if I go around telling everyone that I am unhappy, what good will it do? Go on reciting your woes at every opportunity and see what happens. You'll get no sympathy, people will actually despise you. Or laugh at your expense. Look at the beggars in the street. Hundreds see their supplicating, piteous faces, but how many really fell for them? You don't get true sympathy by begging for it. Face life's battles silently, only then can you earn people's love and respect. Portray yourself as helpless, and rely on the kindness of the world for survival, the world will make you even more dependent.' [p 159]

But Achala! Achala was, as usual harshly self-critical. Sometimes, feeling especially vulnerable, she would ask Virag, 'You won't despise me one day, will you? You don't think I am weak in seeking comfort from you? I was unfaithful to one person and came running to you. You don't think that I will also be unfaithful to you, do you?' [209]

From *With Eyes Wide Open*

Once in your life, when you wholeheartedly dedicate your love to another, every pore in your body blossoms, fires up with fervour. It creates such an incredible strength, powerful magic, never-before-experienced joy. This is what countless souls pine for and artists strive for . . . But sometimes it also happens that the human heart seeks the person who resonates with one, who shares one's hopes and dreams. . . unfortunately we discover that the qualities that attracted us to this one person are just an illusion, a bubble that will burst in a moment. That is when we are in a state like that of a child clutching a red-hot ember, enthralled by its colour. And as love abates, we become like a fish trembling in an arid desert. [p 107]