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**The Complications of the Male “I” in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande.**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of  
Master of Philosophy*

By

Sabreen Ahmed

Under Supervision of Prof Makarand Paranjape



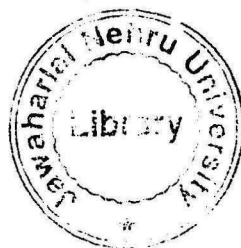
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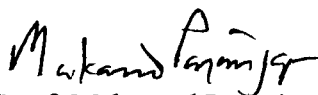
**CERTIFICATE**

Certified that the dissertation titled “The Complications of the Male “I” in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande” submitted by Sabreen Ahmed to the Centre For English Studies, School of Language Literature And Cultural Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

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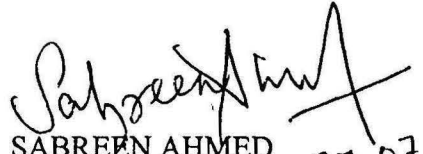
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Declaration by the Candidate

This dissertation titled “**The Complications of the Male “I” in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande**” submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

  
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*For my dear parents ...*

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**SABREEN AHMED.**

## Abbreviations and References

The Dark -- The Dark Holds No Terrors ( Vikas, 1980) New Delhi: Penguin, 1990.

R & S - Roots and Shadows. Bombay: Sangam Books, 1983.

TLS- - That Long Silence.New Delhi: Penguin, 1989.

BV- - Binding Vine. New Delhi: Penguin, 1993.

AMT- - A Matter of Time.New Delhi: Penguin, 1996.

SR- - Small Remedies. New Delhi: Penguin, 2000.

MO- - Moving On. New Delhi: Penguin, 2004.

Margin --Writing from the Margin and Other Essays New Delhi: Penguin, 2003.

## Chapter 1 --- Introduction

### i) The Crisis of a Women Writer.

In the canon of Indian English writing Shashi Deshpande occupies a significant, perhaps even a preeminent position. Over the last three decades the nine novels, more than ninety short stories and a number of essays that she has published have established her as an important voice. Among the many distinguishing features of her writing the most prominent strands are firstly her refusal to “sell out” to global, diaspora driven market forces that cater to the Western Reader which seem to shape the content of much of Indian English Writing. As a “stay at home” novelist she engages with the Indian realities and the cultural confrontations within tradition and the clash with modernity in her works. Secondly she goes against the reductive use of labels of “feminism” and takes the responsibility of being a woman writer seriously by also studying the male psyche. Each of her novels suggests that the challenge of writing about a male by a female writer involves a crisis. This offers scope for a gynocritical reading of her texts in dialogue with both masculine and feminine traditions.

Deshpande started off her career as a short story writer followed by children’s fiction and finally proving her niche as a novelist. She also has a lot of non-fictional work to her credit, where she consistently deals with her crisis as a writer, to be, more precise, a woman writer. In one of her essays entitled “The Dilemma of a Woman writer” she shows her anxiety and a sense of isolation for being a woman writer. In her essays and interviews, Deshpande evidently tries to clarify her “apolitical” position, and foregrounds her displeasure over the straight jacketing of a creative writer in typecast phrases such as “feminist”, “postcolonial” and so on. This tendency of pigeonholing writers which



Deshpande rejects also meets criticism from other levels. Subhendu Mund in one of his essays published in *Littcritt* expresses his sarcasm over a creative writer's identification with a larger geo-political reality within the Indian scenario:

... in the contemporary globalized ,multicultural postmodern times, there is a tendency to pigeonhole writers into national, religious, racial, gender, caste or other such 'identities'. They are often classified into distinctly identifiable group identities: Progressive, Marxist, Commonwealth, Third World, White, Black, Feminist, Dalit, Women, Immigrant, Gay, Lesbian and so on. Thus Shashi Deshpande could be labeled as a Commonwealth/postcolonial South Indian Brahmin woman novelist, and Salman Rushdie as immigrant, Commonwealth, postcolonial, Third World male novelist of the Indian origin with a 'fatwa' in his head. (Mund, 60)

Shashi Deshpande further expresses her disgust in being stereotyped as a writer of a certain "ism" in her essay "Writing from the margin" and remarks:

I sometimes think that feminism has taken us out of the margin – if it has done that- only to deposit us into a ghetto. When I see women's writing being reviewed by woman, studied by woman ...it alarms me. This is a deeply frustrating experience for a writer; it denies us the place and dignity of being a writer who is speaking of human concerns, it diminishes the human value of our work...I don't want to sit only in the chair labeled 'feminist'. I want the whole platform... (Margin, 162)

This very statement carries a sense of ambiguity and it is precisely in this light that her crisis as a writer has to be judged.

A similar debate over the gender of a creative writer is explicitly discussed in Virginia Woolf's A Room Of Ones Own. Woolf says it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. What Woolf means by it is that writers who are thinking about their sex are not thinking about writing; and writing is such a complex and demanding business that one must come to it with a clear head, free of distractions. According to Woolf virility becomes self-conscious for a female who writes. The reasons for this new self-

consciousness are historically complex, most of all because men started reacting to women, and to the pressures of the early women's movement. This general self-consciousness on the part of women acquires particular pointedness in the woman who writes; to write at all is to fly in the face of patriarchal expectation of a woman's capacity and her proper sphere. In Deshpande's case, judging against the preconceived ideas of feminine writing the male narrator or the male "I" in her works become problematic. She says that the idea of having a male "I" first came to her mind when one of her stories was rejected in by an editor asking her to send it to some woman's magazine. The tag of being a feminist or a woman writer alone reduced her work to be propagandist thereby missing out the serious issues enclosed within. She raises a fundamental question that if a male writer is talking about the particular problems of man, they are never termed propagandist but only woman writers like her has to share such isolation. Noted French feminist Helene Cixous in one of her essays, "Castration or Decapitation" writes:

Most women are like this: they do someone else's- man's writing, and their innocence sustain it and give it voice, and end up writing in effect that is masculine. Great care must be taken in working on feminine writing not to get trapped by names: to be signed with a women's name doesn't necessarily make a piece of writing feminine. (Cixous, 108)

Though Deshpande is not in favor of the kind of *écriture féminine* propounded by Cixous, she shares the latter's anxiety over the empirical sex of the author which presupposedly dominates the kind of writing. Deshpande tries to argue self-consciously that using a male 'I' at times is equivalent to the use of pseudonyms by woman writers to conceal their identities. There are complications with this male "I" because the writer in her has to reject her femininity and come out of her woman's skin to narrativize from a male's point of view. Being self-conscious about the intellectual content of her writings in the same article "The Dilemma of a Woman Writer" she asks:

Why did I have a male "I"? Did I do it to distance myself from the subject? Had I too begun thinking that woman's writing was sentimental

emotional and so having a male “I” helped me to pare down the emotions to intellectualize it. But the fact was that both the intellect and emotions were mine. (Quoted in Pathak, 1998)

The male “I” is deliberately interpolated within the narrative to break the typecast image of a feminist or a woman writer. By taking up Deshpande’s novels within my area of analysis I would like to argue how her feminist intervention into male subjectivity can be interpreted in terms of expressing the larger social issue about the loopholes of patriarchy, which are detrimental for both male as well as female. Nevertheless my main concern in this dissertation will be Deshpande’s construct of the “other”, i.e., the men in her novels, her literary construct of the male. When in an interview with Ranjana Harish she says that “I see men and women as two halves of a whole” she comes close to Virginia Woolf’s holistic view of androgyny as the desirable condition for writers. Thus with a view to exhibit both the coexistence of masculine and feminine in her as a writer, she constructs the male “I”. Deshpande’s awareness of the power relationships between male and female has affected the structure of her novels, so that the kernel is concerned with woman characters but is circumscribed by the male voice of authority. Similar to Deshpande Emma Tenant in Woman Beware Woman uses the device of a male figure absent from action yet still the focus. Before analyzing the representation of male subjectivity with respect to the marginal scope of narrativization of male “I” in Deshpande’s oeuvre, I would like to search a ground for the critical positioning of her writings.

The issue of gender and identity seems to be the prime focus in most of secondary readings of Shashi Deshpande’s novels. In their work Indian English Literature 1980-2000, A Critical Survey, M.K Naik and Shyamala Narayan categorizes Deshpande’s fiction under the title “domestic novels” written by a women writer in Indian English Literature. They define her work as woman oriented but also add that it would be incorrect to term her a feminist because there is nothing doctrinaire about her fiction as she simply portrays in depth the meaning of being a woman in India. Among the full length studies on Shashi Deshpande the earliest is Sarbajit Sandhu’s The Image of Woman in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. Here Sandhu looks at her female protagonists

as appendage to man or family, who after initial resistance want to submit themselves to their conventional roles. What I consider as one of the best among the full length studies on Deshpande is Jasbir Jain's Gendered realities, Human spaces. Here she takes into consideration, the whole oeuvre of Shashi Deshpande including her short stories and non-fictional work in an attempt to free Deshpande's work from a reading confined only to woman question and opens it out to aesthetic evaluations and socio-cultural histories. With a slightly different move Mrinalni Sebastian in her The Novels Of Shashi Deshpande in Post Colonial Arguments applies Said, Bhabha, and Spivak's themes in Deshpande's context despite the absence of obvious concepts of nation and race in her plots. In a recent full length study, Shashi Deshpande, critic Amrita Bhalla situates Deshpande's work in the context of Indian Womanhood as reflected in specific historical condition of woman's struggle in India and the literary theory based on Indian cultural, social, religious contexts.

Though my topic of research will be on a gendered perspective focusing on man woman relationships, it would be different from the existing topics, because my main focus will be the delineation of the peripheral male characters by Deshpande. I would try to locate the intricacies of the male subjects from certain psychoanalytical and existential perspectives within the context of patriarchy. In such analysis I would try to show some common tropes such as problems of alienation, effects of the absent mother, passiveness and so on recurring in her male characters who too are victimized in the dominant realm of patriarchy.

## **ii) Shashi Deshpande's "Feminism"**

Though Deshpande herself may not prefer the title "woman writer", it is basically her feminist position that has brought her critical acclaim. In her essay 'Writing from the Margins', she says that literary merit should not be accredited by making feminism the touchstone of a good writing by women. Expressing her antipathy against the division of literature on gender grounds, and the marginalization of a women writer she says "I am just

a writer\_ my gender ceases to matter me... like all **writers** I want to write, to be **published and read**". (Margin, 144)

She does not like the incorporation into the **ghetto** of feminism as the right option to resist marginalization of being a women writer. **Deshpande** is often criticized by her **critics** for her ambiguous positioning on the matter of **feminism**. She is against the application of feminist ideology in her novels while she **steadfastly** calls herself a feminist **thinker**. Feminism, she says, enters as one of the factors of **her writings** not certainly the **governing** one. Speaking from the margin of being a woman **writer** she says, "...where I stand is always the centre, it's the others who are marginal" (Margin, 164-165). In her essay "Why I am a feminist", taking a postcolonial stance she **claims** feminism to be a western concept and in India it cannot be related in terms of local **specific** issues. Further in an interview with Laxmi Holstorm in 1993. cited in *Wasafiri* she **says** that it is difficult to apply Kate Millet or Simon de Beauvoir's ideas to the reality of Indian life, especially because feminism is misconceived in India:

They often think it is about burning **bras** and walking out on your **husband**, children or about not being married, **not having children** etc. I always try to make the point now about what **feminism** is not. (Holstrom, 1993)

Rajeshwari Sundar Rajan, attacks **Deshpande's** writings with bourgeoisie ideas as her domain is centralized to upper caste, middle **class** characters. While focusing on the Virago edition of That Long Silence in her essay "The feminist plot and the nationalist allegory" Rajan asks a tripartite question:

What does it mean to write, at all? **What** does it mean to write as woman? And what does it mean to write as a **woman** in English in India? (**Rajan**, 74-75).

She goes on to foreground literacy versus **illiteracy**, the elitist nature of the act of writing, the class aspect and the high nature of **the** women writing in English and observes:

But to write self-consciously and **programmatically** as a woman is to be preoccupied with feminist **themes** centrally, not incidentally. In

contemporary fiction in Indian languages, such writing has been concerned largely with representing the restrictions of middle class women's lives. Shashi Deshpande's address to the woman question is informed by the particular variety of bourgeois feminism that characterizes this fiction....Deshpande's feminism would seem to require a conscious eschewal of "larger" question of nationalism, a deliberate refusal to write about a "Roy to Rajiv" India... (Rajan, 77)

As a reply to Rajan's charge of westernization on Deshpande's fiction Jasbir Jain maintains that one needs to look at Deshpande's work within a comparative framework of Indian writers who are published in the west and also live there like Gita Mehta(Karma cola and Raj), Chitra Devakaruni Banerjee(Arranged Marriage and Mistress of Spices), Bharati Mukherjee (Desirable Daughters and Jasmine) and analyze their thematic concerns to evaluate the sincerity or otherwise of Deshpande's concerns. In this regard Deshpande's interview with M.D.Riti is worth mentioning where Deshpande remarked, "I do not write for western audiences at all, I write for Indians. That is very important to me..... I never try to make India exotic..... I belong to Indian literature."(Riti, 240) A move away from metropolitan cities to small town environments is, in itself a move towards traditional structures as they lie protected and static in small towns and an attempt to restate and recover cultural meanings.

The conventionally constrictive attitude to women's writing which Deshpande discusses in her essay "The Dilemma of a woman writer" is also equally a matter of concern for other Indian women who are writers. The debate over the gender neutrality of the creative process was the chief concern at the Sahitya Akademi Seminar on "Women writing at the turn of the century"(22-24 Feb2001) which Jasbir Jain very appropriately cites in her work Gendered Realities Human Spaces. Writers from different backgrounds like Meena Kakodkar, Indira Goswami, Pratibha Raj, Mridula Garg and so on commented upon the need to write about their experience about the lack of mobility that restricts women, and the need for courage to step outside boundaries. They frequently mention the phrase 'a writer who happens to be woman', thus emphasizing their location

in gender rather than a conscious choice of feminist themes. Mridula Garg points out that gender oppression and inequality are part of the larger system of social and economic inequality. For women to take position as person the constraints attached to the body have to be addressed "For long social issues were disguised and presented as women issues". For example the "Chipco Movement" was presented as a women's movement. These writers while valuing the gender perspective were resistant to the idea of separate categories because it leads to discrimination and consequently exclusion from the mainstream, while at another level, by labeling all kind of writings of women in one category, certain issues are dismissed. Shashi Deshpande in "Writing from the margin" asks "Is women's writing a different genre, separate from men's?" (143) In a similar vein much earlier Anita Desai, in 1984, in articles entitled "Out of the Schedules", compared it to a ghetto and observed:

I have always considered it objectionable to herd together women writers as if in a ghetto, shunned by the mainstream of literature. The picture such a categorization creates is one of veiled women surreptitiously slipping down dark lanes to hide in their unspeakable burrows, a greater of the city unknown to men.... (Desai, 1984)

Deshpande's feminist position and her crisis as a "women writer" cannot be analyzed in isolation with the Indian women's movement and the feminist literary criticism in India. Feminist literacy criticism in India is a heterogeneous discourse, which incorporate the domination in the stratified Indian society. Maya Pandit in her essay "Towards Indian Feminists Literacy Criticism" says that Indian feminist criticism demonstrates striking similarities with the Marxist-feminist and French deconstructionist with their examination of beliefs concerning self, truth, knowledge power and language. Problematizing the category 'women' a consistent task undertaken by western feminist like Judith Butler, Kristeva, Cixous and so on also holds primary importance within the Indian feminist circle. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan in her essay "The scene of theory in India at the present moment shows that this problematic category of "Women" "has made possible the naming and regularities of "women's writing" that is by definition marginal

or resistant to mainstream literatures. About “Women’s Writing”, Susie Tharu and Lalitha in their seminal work Women Writing in India write :

Feminist Criticism has not merely developed a methodology to study a phenomenon that already exists; women’s writing. Feminist Criticism has actually shaped a new discipline and in the process created, as the object of its study, a new field: women’s writing. There is no denying that women have created or written literature in the past. But as these artifacts are studied as women’s writing, what is charted as an area of study and sculpted into tradition takes on significance that is a contemporary invention. As a discipline, gynocritics have designated its archives, forged its tools, asserted its authority and made its political alignments. (Tharu and Lalita, 22)

Meenakshi Mukherjee’s Realism and Reality and Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid’s Recasting Women locate women’s writing in the context of the colonial period and particularly the various social reformist movements that took shape in this period. A similar anxiety against feminist labels is also raised by Madhu Kishwar in her essay “Why I do not call myself a feminist?” Here she seems to conceptualize that shunning such labels is all that is required for the attainment of a greater sense of freedom and the assumption of “full responsibility” for one’s political ideas, as though independence and a better understanding of Indian realities were a matter of personal will. The Indian women’s movement and its feminist interventions as a form of westernization raises further debates against resisting labels. Radha Kumar historicizes this antipathy against Western tendencies within Indian feminist circles:

Westernized woman was becoming the focus of apprehension from nationalists all over the country. Sarojini Naidu and Begum Shah Nawaz both declared that the Indian Women’s Movement was not a feminist one like the Western movement. V. Ramakrishna Rao displayed univocal distaste for the “sheer grasping suffragette”, bemoaning the loss of Sita



and Savitri; and Cornelia Sorabjee **linked** the newfound assertiveness of many Indian Women with the “Western influence”.(Kumar, 88)

It is problematic to carve a methodological analysis for Shashi Deshpande, because in one hand she is not in favor of applying western feminism to her novels, while on other hand she is vociferous about the influence of writers like Jane Austen, Erica Jong, Margerett Drabble and so on time and again in her interviews. To make matters more ambiguous, in her essay “The Dilemma of a Woman Writer” she lists a sense of isolation and the absence of a model in Indian English Literature.

There was nothing, nobody I could model myself on. What all the English writing by Indian Writers meant to me was this ---I could only tell myself, I don't want to write like this. (Pathak, 229)

Deshpande is silent about her immediate predecessors among women in the Indian English scenario, though many critics have attempted to read her in association with Kamala Markhandya, Nayantara Sahgal and Anita Desai. The fact that binds her with these novelists is not merely the “woman” question but their choice of English as a medium of creative expression as a result of their education and upbringing. The euphoric mirage of sisterhood that woman writers within a similar cultural set up seem to share is absent in Deshpande, precisely because she resists the category “woman”. Does this lack of solidarity in an alternate way suggest that Deshpande is within the phallogentric Lacanian view in “Signifier of Signifiers” that “Woman does not exist”? Perhaps it cannot be reduced to such a crude conclusion. It is part of the dilemma of feminism itself to deny difference, in terms of equal opportunities while at the same time proclaim it, that women are different from men, yet the term woman writer is seen as oppression. Gayle Green in her essay “Looking History” analyses this trend in the post feminist phase of questioning the existence of the very category “woman” and the relevance of the term “feminism”:

At a time when traditional gender roles and relations are being energetically reasserted, there are strong incentives for not identifying ourselves as feminists, or even as women. The feminine has always been

viewed as unprofessional and now, as women are actually moving into the professions it is more than ever suspect. At a time when feminism is being declared the root of all evils from the right and being dismissed as passé from the left (what these widely contradictory positions have in common is the erasure of feminism), at a time when feminism is the new “F word” both academia and without, even feminist scholars will find ways of avoiding it in book titles, course titles, program titles. (Greene & Kahn, 16)

With this lack of assertion as a woman writer, Deshpande feels herself unmentored within her tradition. Andrienne Rich has a wonderful phrase to describe the failed nurturance of women under patriarchy; she says we are “wildly unmothered”. This prominent sense of dislocation is voiced by Deshpande herself in her essay ‘Where do I belong?’ Though Deshpande’s predecessors like Markhandya, Desai and Sahgal have their central protagonists as women, their gender perspectives differ. In Markhandya’s novels the wife is the silent sufferer, the ‘pativrata’, who despite her husband’s neglect thinks of surrendering as the epitome of womanhood. Rukmani in Nectar in Sieve, Premala in Some Inner Fury are only a few. Though Nayantara Sahgal tries to break away from the traditional concept of woman, she does not view her woman characters as wage-earners, or career-woman, but mainly as married woman as wives, daughter, and mother, and it is through these stereotyped roles they experience freedom as individual. Undoubtedly in Deshpande’s novels too there are such women, but such roles are negated if seen from the perspective of the central protagonist. Even some characters of Anita Desai like Amla (voices in the city), Raja (In Custody), Deven (In Custody) all look for self definition in art as the heroines of Shashi Deshpande, yet unlike Deshpande, Desai puts fantasy to strong subjective use. Comparison between Deshpande, Desai, and Sahgal can also be raised in terms of using a male ‘I’ as narrative voice. When Anita Desai in Baumgartner’s Bombay and in In Custody and Nayantara Sahgal in Mistaken Identity turned to male protagonists, Malashri Lal in a significant essay raised several questions, the main among them:

We may further ask whether this transference from female to male centered narratives effectively conveys any social meaning... And finally



does this change record a better literary aesthetic in the works of these authors? (Lal, 280)

During the course of her argument, Lal goes on to demonstrate that while In Custody loses because of male vision in recording the changing social milieu, Desai's second attempt Baumgartner's Bombay succeeds and she seems to have transcended the gender bias as did George Eliot and Virginia Woolf. Sahgal on the other hand in Lal's opinion, fails in her attempt to create a convincing male protagonist. In a similar analysis Jasbir Jain in her essay Men in the minds of women, locates Desai's In Custody and Sahgal's Mistaken Identity in terms of differentiation between omniscient narration and the working of a narrative through male consciousness. In Desai's In Custody though the plot is linked by the narrative consciousness of Deven, he is not a first person narrator or a participant commentator. While in Sahgal's Mistaken Identity the narrative gets into a male perspective through Bhusan and further moves towards an androgynous vision through his femininity. I also keep a similar agenda of differentiating between omniscient narration and the functionality of a narrative through male "I" in Deshpande but the focus will be marginal performativity of male "I" as a locus of subversion by a writer who resists the category "woman". In taking up complications of the male "I" as my focus, I will aim at a gynocritical reading of the text.

Gynocriticism as defined by Elaine Showalter in her essay "Feminism and Literature" is the feminist study of Women's writing including reading of woman's text and the analysis of intertextual relation between woman writers and between woman and men. According to gynocriticism, women's writing is always bitextual, in dialogue with both masculine and feminine traditions, something which is against the "*écriture feminine*" propounded by Helene Cixous. Gynocriticism always emphasized the spurious nature of one sided male claims to universality and also the impossibility of separating women's writing from its context of masculine traditions, even when these are not the main subject. A feminist reading cannot undermine patriarchal texts within female literary traditions and a gynocritical analysis of Deshpande's narrative can point at the subversive resistance in her woman as "wife" or "mother" within the patriarchal domain of domestic space. Gynocriticism also focuses on the topic of androgyny and by reading the complications of

male "I" in Deshpande, I will try to focus on the andocentric tendencies of Deshpande as a rhetor. The issue of androgyny is again problematic in itself if we consider Deshpande's own views upon the same. Speaking on androgyny in her interview included in Just Between Us she says:

So to some extent we do have different languages, but androgynous? Why do we need to be that? Great admire though I am of many of Virginia Woolf's ideas, I question this idea of hers, that the writer needs to be androgynous. Our strengths lie in our real selves, our best writing comes out of our real selves. To reject any part of that real self is to weaken ourselves. But certainly our real selves encompass so much more than our genders. And often we are able to leave this identity aside and write just as human. (Mennon and Joseph, 60)

Here I would like to argue that what she perceives of as the "real self" of a writer is in itself a construct because she applies andocentric strategies as a rhetor in having a male "I" in her narratives. Deshpande's own idea of being a "humanist" instead of a feminist is self contradictory because there is as an obvious "othering" of the male as peripheral in her novels. It is sharply from her female point of view that she internalizes the culturally conditioned and received image of the Indian male in constructing them as peripheral or relational characters but never the centre of the narrative.

Gender is often read as synonym for femininity. In my view gender should do away with sexism. Joan w. Scott has identified three goals of gender theory : to substitute the analysis of social constructs for biological determinism in the discussion of sexual differences, to introduce studies of women and men into the specific disciplinary field and to transform disciplinary paradigms by adding gender as a analytic category. Showalter says that gender theory promises to introduce the subject of masculinity into feminist criticism and to bring men into the field as subjects, scholars, theorist and critic. She adds that masculinity is rarely perceived as a subject within feminist criticism because unlike feminism it seems to be natural, transparent and unproblematic. But in Deshpande's fiction masculinity too has its shackles as problematized through the complications of male subjectivities within the marginal space of her male characters.

### iii) Shashi Deshpande's "Post Colonialism"

The dichotomy between margin and centre forms a major part of the post-colonial debate, where the monolithic identity of the centre is critiqued by the marginal discourses. If we substitute the colonizer –colonized positions in terms of power division in the established norms of patriarchy the centre margin binary can be clearly marked. In an insightful essay Anjali Sharma attempts to read Bhabha's concept of "unhomeliness" as discussed in The Location Of Culture in Deshpande's fiction. She argues that Deshpande's writings reveal her unspoken understanding of issues that post colonial debates would later interrogate in terms of migrancy and creative cross-border fertilization:

A vision that hones in on the 'unhomely' and provides a problematic that dramatizes in the figure of a woman. In Deshpande's fiction urban women and men are the new migrants, dislocated, homeless refugees from a culture that they can't identify, a society that has no recognizable markers, entrapped in emotions that yet to find their names, inhabiting, furthermore, inner spaces whose shadowlines entrap them in a miasma of unknowingness. (Sharma, 104)

To identify Deshpande's narrative as a distinctive text milieu within post feminist literary discourse, would be a more determinist reading because she doesn't focus on the obvious themes for colonial discussions such as nation, exile, neocolonialism, border crossing, hybrid existence etc. In her novels the post colonial subject both male and female is not a minority figure, but belongs to the culturally prominent section of the society. The cultural signs that occur in her texts belong to the dominant culture and especially to that of middle class household. The micropolitics in her world though don't aim at representing colonialism directly, yet it helps us locate the question of the subaltern in a different way through internal colonization within the family structures.

According to Mrinalini Sebastian the privilege of **education** and of **class** do not always rescue Deshpande's woman from a subaltern **position** in the society where she has to struggle to make her position as a gendered subject **apparent**. But this doesn't necessarily confer to the 'itinerary of silencing' of the **contemporary** by the western radical intellectualism as suggested by Spivak in "Can a Subaltern Speak?" According to Spivak throughout modernity, between the twin poles of **neocolonialism** and **indigenous patriarchy** it is the woman who is victimized:

...the figure of the woman (forever) disappears not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the third world women caught **between** tradition and modernization. (Spivak, 102)

Spivak's theory of "masculinist imperialist **ideological** formation" that constructs the third world women pays little attention to how **the contemporary** subaltern must come into voice, hence her theory is politically pessimistic. **No doubt** Deshpande's upper class female subjects caught between tradition and **modernization** have less similarity with Spivak's category of the monolithic third world women **constructed** as silent interlocutors by masculinist discourse. They cannot generically **be termed** subaltern simply because they occupy gendered subject positions as women. **Most of** Deshpande's protagonists are able to transform their silences through writing. They **write** poems, plays, and columns for women's magazines. Indu in Roots and Shadows is a columnist, Jaya in That Long Silence is a short story writer, Urmi in The Binding Vine is a lecturer in English and also a script writer while Madhu in Small Remedies is a journalist. However there are economically less privileged without the armor of **literacy** who are denied speech like the rape victim in Binding Vine, the insane woman Kusum in That Long Silence, Mini in Roots and Shadows, Kalyani in A Matter of Time and so on. These non thinking writing subjects in her novels may fit in Spivak's category of **silent** interlocutors. One must not undermine that there are hierarchies in subalternhood, **and** homogenizing it in terms of post coloniality and gender can further displace the **repressed** voices instead of making them audible through mediation.

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One can analyze Deshpande's postcolonial position in a flexible context in accordance with feminist theory if we go by Kwamame Anthony Appiah's terms of allowing post colonial discourse a figurative flexibility. Sara Suleri in an essay critiquing postcolonial feminism says that the context of contemporary feminist discourse must be read both as a free floating metaphor for cultural embattlement and as an obsolete signifier for the historicity of race. The fact can't be undermined that the post colonial feminist position has its own ambivalences in representing the categories of "woman" and "race". Though pioneering postcolonial critics like Chandra Talpade Mohanty raises her voice against the marginalization and the ghettoization of the third world women by the west, she is not in favor of "women" as a category for analysis. Rather she argues in favor of a feminist solidarity pedagogical model of anti globalization that can tell alternate stories of difference, culture power and agency (Feminism Without Borders, 244). In another post colonial feminist text Woman, Native, Other Vietnamese writer Trinh Minha relocates her gendering of ethnic realities on the theory of postfeminism which seeks to posit an alternative to the anthropological twist that constitute the archaism through which nativism have been apprehended. Many postcolonial feminists are critiqued for reducing biologism to the literal structures of the racial body over gender. If we try to analyze Deshpande's fiction within the critical perspective of postcolonial feminism, it is clear she doesn't fall under the parochialism of privileging the racial body over gender. At times postcolonial feminism is dismantled as essentialist because the balance between gender and race gains obvious preference. Shashi Deshpande's novels are beyond the essentialist racial position of ethnic feminist consciousness as in most of them she problematizes an ethnic background in a small town, the monolithic house, and traditional joint family structure as substructure of power detrimental to the development of feminine as well as masculine subjectivity. Thus explicitly it is not ethnicity or race but the politics of gender which gains prime focus in her fiction. In the opening section of her text Woman, Native, Other Minha attempts to outline an alternative realism within post colonial feminist mentality:

Today the growing feminist consciousness has made it increasing difficult for women of color who writes of turning a blind eye not only to the





specification of the writers as a historical **subject**.... But also to writing itself as a practice located at the **intersection** of subject and history a literary practice that involves the **possible** knowledge (linguistic and ideological) of itself as such... She **must** chose from among three conflicting identities. Writer of color? **Woman** Writer? Or woman of color? Which comes first where does she **place** her loyalties? (Minha, 6)

If we try to locate Deshpande's narrativization in **the** context of such conflicting identities, it is surely her consciousness as a woman **writer** dealing with human issues (not merely woman as she claims) but not as a writer of **color** which defines her as a rhetor.

If Shashi Deshpande's postcolonial feminist position is compared to a theoretical model then she comes close to the views expressed by **black** feminist writer, bell hooks. For hooks, colonization is the conquering of mind and **habits** of oppressed people so that they themselves internalize and accept their inherent **inferiority**. While the process of decolonization is a "disruption of the colonizer/colonized **mindset**", a letting go of white supremacist capitalist patriarchal assumptions and values **which** enables rhetors to look at themselves and the world around them critically and **analytically**. (Outlaw Culture,5) Bell hooks locates racism, sexism, classicism, capitalism and **heterosexism** as interlocking systems, grounded in the same ideology of domination, **and thereby** suggests that sexism and the struggle to end patriarchal domination should be **the primary** importance to men and women globally. (Feminist Theory,35). Individual **experience** of patriarchal oppression, according to hooks leads to realization and **subsequently** accentuates the struggle for resistance for self renewal and recovery. A **similar** decolonizing ideology against sexism is followed by Shashi Deshpande in the **novels** that have been taken under consideration in this dissertation where the female **protagonist** through her individual family experience realizes the patriarchal obstacles and **moves** forward in a subversive resistance though not an obvert one to her path of self **discovery** as well as recovery.

#### iv) Shashi Deshpande's Stylistic Strategy.

Shashi Deshpande undoubtedly fits in the postcolonial condition in terms of hybridity in the use of language. Though she can't be compared to Salman Rushdie's mode of "chutnification", the use of Kannada and Marathi words like "Akka", "Aji", "Chawl" etc form an integral part of the narrative jargon as a marker of her multi-lingual contextuality. Jan Mohammad in his Manichean Aesthetics claim that the very act of writing in English is an antagonistic move, but such a claim doesn't hold ground for Deshpande as she is not addressing her novel from the colonizer-colonized binary. Most of Deshpande's protagonists, Indu in Roots and Shadows, Jaya in That Long Silence Urmila in Binding Vine Madhu in Small Remedies are writers as well as students of English Literature. The glamour of English in a postcolonial country like India is still a current phenomenon. Madhu the first person narrator in Small Remedies offers English a sanctified role when she says "I kept the Oxford dictionary on the table as a symbol of Saraswati" (p.6). Deshpande tries to depict a syncretism in the relationship between English and the vernacular languages in the post independence India. Such a syncretism is symptomatic in the Joe-Leela relation in the Small Remedies, when the narrator remarks:

I think of Joe and Leela, his terrible Marathi and her English almost non-existent. Yet communication between them was perfect. (40)

It will be wrong to undermine Deshpande's critical stance on the colonial burden still carried on by the English Language. She critiques the status symbol attached to the knowledge of English in the character of Mohan in That Long Silence. Cross cultural interactions in terms of intertextual references to the works in English literature or writers is also a prominent feature in her novels. Besides the female protagonists who are generally students of English literature the male characters are not far behind in showcasing their obvious fascination for British Literature. In the TheDark Holds No Terrors, Saru's husband Manu is a lecturer in English and a poet who is compared to

Shelley for the passionate strains in his verses. Further Joe's constant reference to the Brontes in Small Remedies, B.K.'s direction of the **grave digger's** scene in Hamlet in Moving On, Baba's fascination with Dickens in Moving On shows how her human subjects are still influenced by the love of English Literature. I will deal with this topic in greater detail when I shall take up each text for ~~detailed~~ study. I find myself in a precarious position to read the influence of English literature as the symptom of being still colonized, because I myself stand on the same boat. In fact I would like to argue that using English in ones local context is one form of decolonization. Deshpande though uses the English language as her medium of expression with **explicit** references to the texts of canonical British literature, nevertheless all her writings are context bound to the decolonizing phase that India is going through in the **post independence** era. In terms of reading Deshpande's language, Raja Rao's seminal **statement** "language which is not ones own but spirit own" completely fits into the context.

#### v) Patriarchy in the Indian Context

The fictional world of Shashi Deshpande reflects **many** realities of the Indian patriarchal set up. Before proceeding to each of her novels I would like to discuss some concepts in this regard analyzed within the spectrum of **Indian** Feminism ranging from Marxist readings to more traditional ones. Many studies **related** to patriarchy in India aims at homogenizing the same to an indigenous Indian **ideology**, mainly through roots of Hinduism. But in a diverse society like India, with **disparities** in class, caste, region and religion, the underlying patriarchal structures have seen an **unequal** growth. The content of Islamic patriarchy in India, finds much less coverage **within** Indian feminist critical circles. Further the same seems to be even less **relevant** in terms of understanding patriarchy as depicted by Shashi Deshpande, for except Small Remedies all her novels are devoid of Muslim characters. As a continuation to this very issue, of an attempted homogenization of patriarchy in India, Mary E. John's **statement** seems to be worth mentioning:

Though India enjoys a rich legacy of political economic analysis, it is troubling that discussions of secularism and communalism, for instance, so rarely address the structural forms of marginalization that have gone into the making of the “Muslim”.(John, 440)

Another important feminist critic Kumkum Sangari, sees “consent” and “misogyny” as two unifying factors within the multiplicities of patriarchal structures in India, right from the days of colonialism. She says in the introduction to Politics of the Possible that:

Consent stretches beyond compensation and compulsion into orchestrating anti-feminisms, dividing women, uniting some women \_\_ the traditionalist memsahib with the new loyalist upper class ashraf women \_\_ against others, and into the changing semantic of the good wife or ‘pativrata’ (XLIV).

Sangari locates misogyny as a unifying factor in men that breaks the dyads of the British and Indian, Hindu and Muslim, missionary and administrators, *pandits* and *maulavis* in a common structure of hate.

The bandwagon of radical feminism carried out by the right-wing political groups tries to favour a “cultural autonomy” which problematizes the heterogeneous, fissiparous and cross-cutting nature of a diversified society like India. This raises further debates within the Indian context of patriarchy. R.S Rajan in her essay “Is the Hindu goddess a feminist?” questions if ‘woman power’ can be called indigenous within a whole patriarchal tradition of worshipping Hindu Goddesses. Here she debates the possibilities of a matriarchal world view in contrast to the singular patriarchal God of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. She argues that the Indian Woman’s Movement of the mid 1970s initiated by urban middle class professional women invoked ‘traditional Indian symbols’ in some cases as a means of diluting the Western bias against ‘feminism’. The goddess figure, or in a more diffusive way the concepts of “stri-sakti” and the “feminine principle” were restored in order to mobilize women. Perhaps as a consequence of the same the logo and name of India’s first feminist press is Kali For Women.

In a similar study based on the concept of **matriarchal world views**, Katherine K Young in an essay “Women and Hinduism”, **associates the worship of Goddesses with more nature- oriented purposes which give rise to numerous feminine deities besides the prominent ones like Kali and Durga.** Speaking on **Indian Women’s attraction to certain goddesses**, she cites the role of caste as a potential **issue**, thus she writes:

Independent Goddesses have **existed in India since time immemorial and have been especially popular with the lower castes.** These have included the village mothers **manifested as stones, trees, animals and independent women.** Independent **Goddesses are not married and their eroticism is not restrained, they are portrayed as giving birth or making love.** Although have related to women’s **domestic concerns they have also related to the community’s concerns with rain crops, and prosperity...** Their social status is **more like that of human than abstract and remote sanskritic deities.** The **other major independent Goddesses have of course been Durga and Kali. Especially in their more sanskritized forms, they have been worshipped by the upper castes.** But now with growing independent spirit, it is no **coincidence they are looking to independent goddesses rather than wife goddesses for inspiration.** The word ‘sakti’ signaling the new power of **women is in; ‘pativrata’ signaling their their subservience is out.** (Young, 27)

Another critic, C.T. Indra in her essay “Some aspects of feminism relevant to Indian society”, offers a persuasive analysis in favor of an **Indian ideology regarding women.** She argues that patriarchy is a social construct rather than a **traditional norm.** The ancient Indian thought is predominantly metaphysical and **oriented towards reaching the truth.** Human personality is regarded as a composite of many **planes or layers with the soul or “atma” as the supreme centre.** The “soul” or “*atma*” is “sexless”, i.e. there is no distinction between men and women in relation to ones soul. In Sankya and post-Sankya system of ancient Hindu philosophy, the set *Purusha* and *Prakriti* is used, the former representing the being and the later the becoming. The first is the male and the second the

female. It is an esoteric way of representing the Numenon and the Phenomenon. There is no superiority and inferiority implied. The Upanishads themselves, on their reference to social relationships put the mother first and the father afterwards. The relevant verse from chapter III, 5<sup>th</sup> section of 'Taittiriya Upanishad' talking about progeny:

The mother is the first form and the father is the latter form Progeny is the linking... (Sri Aurobindo, Eight Upanishad, 172-73)

Through these references C.T. Indra tries to argue that patriarchy is not indigenous to ancient Indian tradition, later day invasions and several sociological and political forces connived to give primacy to patriarchy in Indian society. Citing Swami Vivekananda's statement Indra argues that the reduction of woman must have been the legacy of the influence of Semitic culture on Indian society. (The Complete Works, V 229)

But all scholars and historians do not hold the same view regarding the status of women in ancient India. Vijaya Ramaswami in her essay "Researching Icons and, Representing Indian Women" holds that chastity was iconized as a patriarchal device to strengthen male domination through women like Ahalya, Sita, Tara, and so on. She adds that in all references to the position of women in Vedic times some women have been held up as icons of scholarship, independence and liberal lifestyle. These were the Brahmadinis: Gargi, Maitriyee, Apala, Lopamudra and sixteen others. Scholarly studies by the sanskritists have focused on the role of the Brahmadinies as disseminators of Vedic knowledge and wisdom. Some of these women like Ghosa chose to remain unmarried breaking away from the patriarchal norms of marriage, wifehood and motherhood and opting for an alternative lifestyle.

In all of Shashi Deshpande's novels a Brahman household is depicted where almost all her central female protagonists are knowledgeable enough with a flair for writing, thereby somewhat close to incorporating the role of the "Brahmadinis". Though Deshpande cannot be said to uphold the "feminine principle" of "Stri-sakti" through her characters, it is explicit that there is an outright rejection of the "pativrata". Patriarchal symptoms become clearly visible in her plots in the marital fissures between the couples,

and the predominant position of the father figure in all her novels. My particular focus on the complications of male “I” would show how patriarchy can inflect psycho-social pressures on the growth of male subjectivities as well.

A study of patriarchal structures as a part of gender analysis is incomplete without taking into account the construction of masculinities within a heterogeneous cultural set up. Masculine narratives structure the family and figure out the discourses of protection. Despite the absence of an all encompassing male narrative in Deshpande, one can interpret the theoretical construction in her narrative of an archetypal Indian masculinity. Taking on from this proposition analysis can be made of discourses associated with that narrative which construct masculinist interventions in the social world as “Care” and “Protection” in the social world of middle class Indians in her novels. But her construction of masculinity tends to problematize the standard masculinist ways of subjectivity in their latent anti-heroic tendencies. To be more precise her marginal male subjects contribute to the making of the subjectivities of all those who are the incomplete and the lacking “others” of patriarchy’s male hero. Her novels also contributes to the construction of an internalized and unconscious compliance with the structures of patriarchal order depending on its objects and subjects, recognizing, acknowledging and living what patriarchy constructs as their lack in ways which make them desire its cure.

A historicization of the formulations of masculinity in India finds a significant coverage in the introductory chapter of Hetukar Jha’s Man in Indian Tradition. He says that “manliness” emerged in India as an important issue in the colonial period among those forming the class of intelligentsia who considered defending and asserting Indian manliness necessary in view of the contemptuous attitude widely held by the British authorities towards it. The colonial masters had their own notion of man and manliness which had emerged and gained ground in Western Europe since the beginning of the modern age. George L Mosse’s historical views in The Image of Man, reveals that educational institutions were used for the institutionalization of manly values in society. The ideal of masculinity was invoked for national regeneration and manliness was supposed to safeguard the existing order. The colonial authorities having such notion on

the role and content of manliness discovered in India the very antithesis of manhood. After independence with the departure of the colonial masters the relevance of such an image is lost. Now, in the changed situation of the country, a redefinition of man is required. Ashish Nandy and Sudhir Kakar content in this context that “we need today an approach to the study of man which would...provide multiple models of man in society to widen rather than restrict human choices”. To uphold this view an analysis of the ancient concepts regarding Indian masculinity seems necessary. The ancient Sanskrit scholar, Vidyapati’s text *Purusha Pariksa*, which Hetukar Jha studies in translation, formulates the discourse of Indian masculinity. This discourse prescribes the attributes of a manly man or Purusha as courage or valour (*saurya*), sense of discrimination (*viveka*), boldness of will or perseverance (*utsaha*), acute wit (*pratibha*), exact memory (*medha*) and learning (*vidya*). Out of these attributes its Bravery and Viveka guided by *dharma*, *arhta*, and *Kama* which are adjudicated as most crucial in eventually leading a man to attain *Purushartha* or manhood. The text also defines the attributes of unmanly man such as---- *kayar*(timid), *bhiru*(coward), *alasi*(lazy bones) *abuddhi*(no-wit), *avidya*(man without any learning). The crucial difference between Vidyapati understands of man and that of others, i.e. western scholars and Indian intellectuals of the colonial period arises due to the difference in their understanding of “the brave”, because Vidyapati doesn’t give importance to physical prowess. If we judge Deshpande’s male subjects from this perspective of the coded Sanskrit text we can find them lacking the true aspect of *Purushartha* in terms of bravery, rather they exhibit some of the unmanly traits like cowardice. A detailed analysis of each of the male subjects in her novels would substantiate to validate my point.

#### vi)The Concept of ‘Margi-Man’

The concept of ‘margi-man’ emerges from a deconstruction of the enlightenment metanarrative of a specifically masculine sexed subject whose perception and construction of the worlds he observes is marked at every point by his embodied subjectivity, and is therefore at best partial representations. Feminist deconstructionist



Carmen Luke focuses on the Freudian notion of **the death-instinct**, where subjectivity is conceptualized as founded in the life/death **opposition**. Luke mentions that **the phallogocentric institutions of the military, cultural myths, fables, narratives and literary texts that construct masculine heroes who pay the price of death for their quest of love, and the 'brutal inscription' of the life/death conflation in the pornographic texts which superimpose imageries of violence and death on 'the fundamental life-giving act of sexual intercourse'** (Luke 1992, p.32). Before coming directly to the idea of marginalization of the metanarrative of **masculinity**, certain views regarding the construction of masculinity has to be taken **into** account. Harstock speaks of the masculine subjectivity constructed in Hegel's **analysis** of the self-conscious subject, and of its complex and intimate relations to **epistemology**:

Hegel's analysis makes clear the **problematic social relations available to the self which maintains itself by opposition**: each of the two subjects struggling for recognition risks **it own death** in the struggle to **kill the other**, but if the other is killed **the subject** is once again alone. In sum **then** the male experience when **replicated** as epistemology leads to a world conceived as, and inhabited by, a number of fundamentally hostile **others** whom one must construct a **social relation** in order to survive. (Harstock, 170)

Again Benhabib, relating the construction of **strong boundaries between self and other**, and a sense of separation and isolation **comments** on the projection of this constructed and troubled masculinity into theoretical **constructions** of the public and the social, such as the social contract and the law:

The saga of the autonomous male **ego** is the saga of the initial sense of loss in confrontation with the **other**, and the gradual recovery from the narcissistic wound through the sobering experience of war, **fear**, domination and death. The last **installment** of this drama is the social contract: the establishment of **the law** to govern all....to reestablish the authority of the father in the image of the law. (Benhabib, 84-85)

I would agree with Terry Threadgold, who in her Feminist Poetics critiques the above mentioned views on the construction of masculinity, because their generalization is context specific in terms of validity. It is appropriate to take the concept of 'margi-man' to question the masculine construction within a dominant patriarchal metanarrative of "Care" and "Protection".

To begin my analysis of the focalization of the male subject in Shashi Deshpande's novels, I would look into the concept of marginal male characters in feminist texts. Stephan Heath in his essay "Male Feminism" in Mén in Feminism is not in favor of such an idea. In the same essay he has analyzed the issue of writing and gender from several perspectives working through Freudian and Lacanian positions, pornography and sexuality, and has gone on to observe the neutrality of the male mind based in a position of domination, "they have the neutrality of domination, theirs is the security of indifference". Ernest Van Alphen counters Heath's idea by reinforcing the fact that there can be an alternative reading as 'margi-man', where male subjectivity is no longer supposed to be the centre or norm, but marginal only one possibility among a heterogeneous series of possibilities. From a theoretical angle Alphen assumes that in reading as 'margi-man' the dominant image of male identity, however confirmed as real life like is a mere construction that has produced and maintained a problematic reality in the guise of patriarchy. This theoretical insight undermines the stability of that traditional image of the male subject and opens up possibilities for an alternate reading.

For however problematic ridiculous, contaminating the shameful aspect of male sexuality as informed by the current relations of dominance may be perceived to be, it is subject to change, being "merely" a construction. The practice of reading and producing meaning is one important area where the constructedness of subjectivity can be felt as co-directing and co-opting the image of the subject that will serve as a trigger for identification. (Elphen, 146)

Yet construction of a 'margi-man' has its **own complications**, because it is not easy to replace the dominant image of male identity as a mere projection. I would agree with Alphen when he says that the problem of this **image** or marginality entails a kind of alienation. It is not merely a projection by the **other** but defined by ones own **gender** at the expense of other subjects. But there is an **essential** negativity to this concept as Elphen writes:

It is neither possible nor desirable to **distance** oneself from the dominant image of male identity. It is **impossible** because gender identities cannot be changed or exchanged at will. **Only** to a limited extent is one aware of the moments at which and the **situation** in which one feels and acts according to an imposed image or **pattern**. Nor is it desirable because "we" men that is, cannot liberate **ourselves** from the old image without drawing a lesson out of it. Precisely **because** this image is not a **reflection** of the true nature of men but the **construction** of an ideal made out of desires and fears it is necessary to **understand** which male desires fears and interests are flashed out and answered **by** the dominant image. With first grasping the motivations that have **informed** the traditional image of male identity, it is impossible to connect **the** current state of things, including the identities of living men to **alternative** views. (Elphen, 140)

Thus keeping in mind such a perspective I **would** locate the peripheral male subjects in the matrix of Deshpande's novels as problematic **both** in their own terms as well as with relation to their counterparts. The male "I" is **marginal** only in terms of having a first person narrative voice, but in terms of perpetuating **emotional** and physical turmoil in the lives of their female counterparts, their role **seems** to be all pervasive. Though by marginalizing the narrative space for the male **subject**, Deshpande **adopts** a subversive resistance, but with respect to the process of self **introspection** of her female subjects, the plots further reinforces the male subjects' dominance **in the** patriarchal terrain.

## Chapter 2

### **Problematic of the Marginal Male “I”: A Study of Five Novels of Shashi Deshpande.**

Predominantly in almost all of Shashi Deshpande’s novels the centre stage is captured by her female subjects, thereby apparently marginalizing the male characters in the plot. She problematizes the concepts of Indian masculinity through her peripheral male characters. Though the “performativity” of the male “I” or male narrative is marginal, it nevertheless diminishes the dominance of her male subjects in the plot structure as an overwhelming presence in the power structure of gender roles, in creating impediments for their female counterparts. There is a problematic relation between the “I” who speaks and the narrative he/she who recounts. Third person narration is always the mark of the absence of “I” who speaks. The third person narration is told of a non-person, which theoretically speaking is the male subject in Deshpande, a “he” who is told in most instances through an absent male “I”. According to Roland Barthes’ concepts of subject construction, there is always a disjunction between the “I” who speaks, the “I” who is constructed or told as he/she with the ‘I’ who is interpreted by the reader (Barthes 1986: 17). Thus the male “I” is in the margins only in terms of occupying first person narrative space. My focus in the following analysis of the five novels will investigate Deshpande’s indomitable preoccupation with the discursively created absent male “I” firmly posed as a challenging “other” against her central female protagonists.

#### **i) The Male “I” and the Trope of Failure in The Dark Holds No Terrors.**

Deshpande’s first novel The Dark Holds No Terrors demystifies the codes of a man’s superiority in the social milieu. Shashi Deshpande here probes into the failed ego of a male subject through Manu, whose sadistic impulses are instrumental in shattering the very edifice of a romantic marriage. Suffering from inferiority complex Manu’s

subjectivity offers relevant scope for making a study in split personality. As a reversal in the gender game Manu's degeneration starts with his wife Saru's increasing success in her medical profession and the fading of his literary talents to mediocrity. Before discussing in details the intricacies of the schizophrenic implications in Manu's subjectivity, certain observations with regard to the failing traits of Indian masculinity has to be taken into account. Sudhir Kakar's observation on the Sita legend in Intimate Relations: Exploring Indian Sexuality locates the flaws of the Hindu imagery of manliness in Rama's character. Rama may have the traits of a "god-like hero, yet he is also fragile, mistrustful and jealous and very much a conformist, both to his parents' wishes and to social opinion" (Kakar 1981:66). Ashis Nandy reinforces a similar view of weakness in Indian masculinity in his essay, "Woman versus Womanliness in India: An essay in Social and Political Psychology". Here he states:

The concept of *adya shakti*, primal or original power, is entirely feminine in India. It is the male principle in the godhead, *purusha*, which is reliable but relatively passive, weak and secondary (Nandy, 72).

In the same essay he goes on to discuss the differences of Indian forms of masculinity in its proximity with the feminine principle in sharp contrast to the western tradition:

In India, unlike in many western societies, the softer forms of creativity and the more intuitive and introspective styles of intellectual and social function are not strongly identified with femininity. Nor is masculinity that close linked to forceful, potency-driven, 'hard' and 'hardheaded' modes of intrusive behavior. Sex-role specific qualities here are differently distributed. In fact the concept of potency in Indian high culture has always had a private, introversive quality about it. (Nandy, 75)

Thus Deshpande's portrayal of weak male subjects is not outside the cultural realm of her social milieu. The inhibitions and apprehensions regarding the sexual behavior of Indian couples are depicted in Saru's reaction to Manu's sadistic sexual aggression. Manu's abnormal sexual behavior is the outcome of a false attempt to exercise power and perpetuate dominance over his spouse who is socially and financially much above him in status. Here marital rape for Manu acts as an instrument to exhibit his lost strength, a

convenient façade to falsify the decreasing levels of his potency. Schizophrenic impulses can be registered in Manu's subjectivity because his normal behavior at day with his wife shows no sign of any repercussions of his monstrous act at night, which is further aggravated by Saru's reticence to the whole issue. Thus the omniscient narrator describes:

It was part of the same pattern that had mystified her from the day it had began...his cheerfulness the next morning, his air of being his usual, the complete total normality. She had almost given up trying to put the two men together, the fearful stranger of the night, and the rather pathetic Manu of other times. But it never ceased to frighten her, this dichotomy.  
(The Dark, 96)

Saru was the dual victim—first of Manu's schizophrenia, and secondly of her apprehension in disclosing the matter. Talking about the latent nature of sexual problems in Indian culture, R.Mala in her essay "Sexual predicament and Shashi Deshpande's Women" says:

The problem in the Indian sexual panorama is that sex has been branded as a taboo and the discussion in it in the public is avoided. In spite of the openness of our ancestors, who chose temple walls as excellent repositories of sexual mudras, very few people particularly women, are willing to dilate on their sexual problems if any. The heroines of Deshpande face the same situation in their sexual relationships with their husbands...Saru's silence against her sexual predicament only reveals the modern women's dilemma-----of knowing the psychological nature of the problem but hesitant to talk about it.(Mala.R, 53-54)

Saru was silent because she too understood that it was her success which became the yardstick to measure Manu's failure. Manu in his youth was a brilliant student of English literature, and had the potential to be a promising poet and playwright. Manu with the "aura of distinction" about him as the effective Secretary of the Literary Association, Debating Union and Dramatic society was compared to none other but the romantic poet

Shelley. It was this image of a “superior, superhuman male” that Saru adored and got married to before the completion of her graduation. But once the feminine ‘I’ in Saru moved towards recognition as a lady doctor she overreached the male ‘I’ of her low salaried husband Manu, a lecturer in a third rate private college. Manu’s insecurity is revealed by Saru in the following words:

...when we walked out of our room, there were nods and smiles, murmured greetings and *namastes*. But they were all for me, only for me. There was nothing for him. He was almost totally ignored...the human personality has an infinite capacity for growth. And so the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps, the same thing that made me inches taller made him inches shorter. He had been the young man and I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband.

$a+b$  they told us in mathematics is equal to  $b+a$ . but here  $a+b$  was not, definitely not equal to  $b+a$ . it became a monstrously unbalanced equation, lopsided, unequal, impossible. (The Dark, 36-37)

Masculinity in India is nourished with the images of suffering and subdued woman who can be easily dominated. The role of women as the mother-protector, the inspirer and the motivating force, as the object of desire, weakling and dependent on men tends to magnify men’s stature by contrast. Though the plot concentrates on Saru’s perspective keeping her husband in the background, yet his sadism jeopardizes her identity within the enclosures of patriarchy. Patriarchy defines the hierarchical structure of marital roles which in case of Manu is inverted. Saru acknowledges this in the following interior monologue:

Don’t ever try to reverse the doctor-nurse, executive-secretary, principal-teacher role. It can be traumatic, disastrous. And I assure you, it isn’t worth it. He’ll suffer, you’ll suffer and so will the children, women’s magazine’s will tell you that a marriage should be an equal partnership. That’s nonsense, rubbish. No partnership can ever be equal. It will always

be unequal, but take care if it's unequal in favor of your husband. If it tilts in your favour, God help you, both of you. (The Dark, 137)

The binary of husband as 'provider and protector' versus wife as 'recipient and protected' is reversed in Manu-Saru relation which makes Manu insecure. Premila Paul in her essay "The Dark holds No Terrors: A Woman's search for Refuge" rightly suggests that there are three problematic incidents that are frequently evoked by Saru from her bitter memory in a fragmentary fashion in the first three sections of the novel. These three incidents regulate and even control Saru's happiness. The first one is Saru's interview for a special issue on career woman brought out by a woman's magazine. The interviewer's casual query put to Manu---"how does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?"(182)---undermines Manu's confidence totally. His sense of insecurity starts with the explosion in the nearby factory. The lover in him dies when the neighbors wake up to the fact that Saru is no ordinary housewife but an important figure in the face of a doctor. Unable to come to terms with the fact that he is a failure in life, Manu lets his wounded male pride manifest itself in the form of sexual sadism "the hurting hands, the savage teeth, the monstrous assault of a horribly familiar body."(102) Gerda Learner rightly posits that men punish women by "ridicule, exclusion or ostracism" if they attempt to interpret their own roles. Saru internalizing Manu's self hatred thus remarked:

We belong to the same caste really. Both of us despise ourselves. What he does to me, he does it not so much because he hates me, but because he hates himself. And I ... I hate myself for letting him do it to me than I hate him for doing it to me (The Dark, 8).

Manu's schizophrenic tendencies-- as a monster at night and charmer at day, is basically capital driven. His failure to prove his niche in the literary field also led to his stagnancy in a low paid job in a private college. He never hoped to join a salaried job, but he was forced to do so by Saru who was still nascent in her medical profession when their



first child Renu was born. Devastated mentally **by the sadistic attacks of Manu, Saru even** thought of giving up her work to give more **time to her husband and children. But Manu** rejected the idea because he couldn't imagine a **life without the luxuries made possible by** Saru's earnings. Making a clear confession of his **low financial capability** he remarked:

On my salary? Come on Saru, don't be silly. You know how much I earn. You think we can live this way **on that?** ...can you bear to **send the** children to a third-rate school? **To buy** them the **cheapest clothes, the** cheapest of everything? To save **and-scrape** and still have nothing **after the** first few days of the month? No **Saru** there is no going back .We have to go on? (The Dark, 81)

Showing a complete façade in his actions, that **day he** behaved with Saru as a **doting** husband like the early years of their marriage **cajoling** her with tender words and **silly** diversions of mind like the offer for a movie. **This shows** Manu's inherent duality of nature--- first, his sluggishness to accept **challenges** in life and at the same time his inability to accept the Status Quo as an inferior to **his wife**. The hideousness of Manu's subjectivity is concealed behind a masqueraded **self in his** groomed outer demeanor ---a stylish beard to add a little more to his mask of **normalcy** as Saru perceived. Even his maniac strength during his sexual attacks was **nothing** but a sham to manipulate his gradually increasing impotency. Deshpande in the **position** of an omniscient narrator describes Manu's first sadistic attack in the following **words**:

And he began what was then for them a **peculiar** kind of love-making, with something in it that set it apart **from all** their other times together. It was not just that he was more **intense**, with nibbling little kisses interspersed with long devouring ones **that** so that she could scarcely breathe. It was the feeling that he was **whipping** himself on, trying to arouse himself to some piece of excitement **that** yet remained **beyond** him. For when she felt him against her, she **knew** there was **nothing**. It was a sham. And something about it sickened **her...** For the first time in their

years together he couldn't go on. At last he gave up and fell back in his place. (The Dark, 86)

It is precisely because of his failure in all aspects of life that led to Saru's hatred for him, and she sought refuge in her father's house as a means of escape from her conjugal hell. Sarita had alienated herself from her parents for many years because of her inter-caste marriage, only to come back after her mother's death. It is here living with her father and Madhav, a distant relative that she comes in terms with the facts of her life and begins her process of self introspection.

When the novel opens, unable to solve her marital crisis, Saru seeks a temporary refuge in confrontation with her father after a gap of fifteen years. As a recurrent trope in Deshpande's novel's the father- figures are shown to be more liberal and progressive in relation with their daughters while the mothers fully cooperate in the ideological mechanism of patriarchy. Saru's relation with her mother following the accidental death of her kid brother Dhruva was totally embittered because the latter accused her for Dhruva's death by drowning. Though Saru's father never blamed her directly for Dhruva's death, yet he never tried to intervene in breaking the barrier that separated her from her mother. Returning back after so many years Saru was surprised to see her father fully in control of the household chores in Madhav's company, which had earlier remained in the sole domain of her mother. Deshpande describes his new role after his wife's death in the following words:

He had always been so much the man, the master of the house, not to be bothered by any of the trivials of daily routine. And yet he seemed comfortable in this new role, as if his earlier inactivity had been a giving-in to his wife's ideas, nothing to do with himself. (The Dark, 20)

Deshpande exhibits no melodramatic reunion between father and daughter. Saru's father had always known about her whereabouts yet he had never attempted any reconciliation with her. Moreover she was not even informed about her mother's death by cancer. Nevertheless he didn't rebuke her in her return. When he showed a kind of indifference in

enquiring about her children, she was first angered but soon **realized** her own position where there was almost no scope for any expectations. **Sharing the commonality of weak masculinity** in Deshpande's male subjects, Baba in spite of **his weak will** was the only repose of strength left for Saru:

Perhaps she had known even then that he was **feeble**. No worse than that he was a non-entity and that did not matter. **And yet** he had battled on her behalf once. (The Dark, 29)

Though Saru's father didn't take much interest in her **studies** in her school days, yet he was never a staunch patriarch for he allowed her the **freedom** to choose a profession for herself. In fact, it was the only instance when he stood firm **against** his wife in defending Saru's choice for a medical profession rather than forcing **her to go** for a marriage of their choice. In spite of the feebleness in his subjectivity, **her father** adopts the role of a confidant in guiding her through her marital crisis. Despite **the gender gap** between them, Saru could open up to her father about the sadistic attacks of Manu which ruined her marriage. It is he who offers her sympathy, understanding **and advice** against her escapist routes. He persuades her to replace a sense of self-**blame** and grievance with the investment in the present in advising her to face facts **rather than** running away from them. The male 'I' in Baba breaks his overwhelming **reticence** and speak up his own guilt consciousness of escaping from things which **could have** been solved through discussion:

Do you know Saru I often feel sorry that **we** left so many things unsaid, your mother and I. when she lay dying I **wanted** to ask her ...would you like to meet Saru. Sometimes I think **she might** have said "yes". But I never did silence had become a habit **with us**. Now go on, tell me. Tell everything. (The Dark, 199)

His realization of his own guilt in keeping silent helps **him** in persuading Saru to discuss her problems with him. When Saru decided to go away from her father's place at the

news of Manu's arrival, Baba made all his efforts in asserting his lost authority in dissuading her from her decision of avoiding her husband. Struggling to be tenacious and persistent he implored her:

Are you scared of him? ... Give him a chance, Saru. Stay and meet him. Talk to him let him know from you what is wrong... Don't turn your back on things. Turn round and look them. Meet him. (The Dark, 216)

Baba made a desperate attempt to gain control over things which were falling apart in their lives because of his hitherto indifference to his daughter's problems. Realizing Saru's emotional entrapment to her painful past, her father tried hard to shake her out of her traumatic nostalgia:

...your mother is dead. So is your brother. Cant you let the dead go? ... They can do nothing. Why do you torture yourself with others? Are you not sufficient for your own life? Its your life isn't it. (The Dark, 217)

Saru's father was a failure initially in holding his family together, and initiating reconciliation between mother and daughter, however, finally he succeeded in convincing Saru to wait for Manu. The narrative closes with an open ending; nevertheless, there is some hope for the reader that perhaps there is an end to Saru's crisis, by the aid of her father.

Two other examples of failures of masculinity are exhibited by the marginal characters Boozie and Padmakar. They pose as the supposed other man in Saru's life, but could give her no respite out of the angst of her conjugality. Boozie is the benefactor who helped Saru in climbing the stairs of her career graph. He was a kind of fairy godfather for Saru helping her all throughout----- in getting work in a research scheme, passing her MD in less than two years, opening her own consultancy room, getting a loan and so on. Manu never expressed anything overtly, but it is needless to say that Boozie was a constant means of insecurity for him. Manu's reticence over the matter created complications for Saru, further she ironically hated Manu for overlooking her closeness with Boozie. There are direct suggestions of a façade behind Boozie's overwhelming masculinity in Saru's opinion about him:

He was precisely close to a **woman's magazine hero ... dark, rugged, handsome and masterful. Everything** about him ... his language, his accent, his stride, his pipe, his **swift progress through the wards, his banter** with his patients ... **contributed** to the aura that surrounded him. They were all props, I decided later, to **help create and maintain the necessary image.** (The Dark, 88)

There are suggested implications of impotency **even** behind the mask of robust **masculinity** in Boozie. Disgusted with her husband's sadism Saru in one occasion went up to Boozie in his home for help. But she only returned **with the knowledge** of an alternate self in him. The identity of the person who was with Boozie at that moment is kept as a **mystery for the reader**, but there are enough hints of his **being homosexual** in his constructed **image of a Casanova** to conceal from the world the **truth of his personal life**. Although he **attempted to overwhelm Saru** by his masculinity, she **was astonished** to find that there **was nothing** behind it. Thus she remarked:

He had always been so **immensely** discreet, never a look never a **glance** at the male students. The **drama of interest** in the pretty girls... **Nothing** effeminate about him in the **way** he dressed moved or spoke. It was something else... A nebulous **aura** of femininity about him, **faked, spurious,** and therefore all the more **assertive.** (The Dark, 98)

Another male subject in whom effeminacy **can be traced** is Saru's batch mate **Padmakar**, popularly known as Padma, "as if the **feminine name Padma** deprived him of his maleness". Padmakar like Manu was a **failure** in his ambitions; he failed in **having a valid** subject for research and thus could never **complete his MD**. Saru's **friendly gestures** towards him became a kind of obsession **with him**, and soon she **realized that her** calculation of making Padma an **escape route** against her loveless life was a **mistake**. Padmakar's marital position is completely **different** from Manu, as it was in **conformation** to the social conventions of having an **intellectually incompetent wife** confined merely to domestic chores. This irritates him and he **grumbles** before Saru:

My wife she can't talk about anything but servants and the children. And prices. I earn enough, but she is perpetually trying to economize. She never has her food until I go home and mine, she cooks just what I like, and she never calls me by my name. (The Dark, 132)

Padmakar being unsuccessful in his ambitions directs his frustrations towards his wife for being what she was and secondly to Saru for not giving him enough time to discuss his problems with her. This shows the attitude of a weak male subjects' transferring of own blame upon the other as a therapeutic measure for his inherent failings.

The other most important male character in the plot is Dhruva, whose brooding presence haunts Saru throughout her life inspite of the bitter truth that he was dead. The circumstances of his death left a deep chasm between the mother daughter relationships. Saru grows up feeling insecure and unwanted as her mother showed a marked preference for Dhruva. Sudhir kakar in The Inner World notes that for Indian Women in patriarchy, delivering a male child is deliverance from insecurity; it is a certification and redemption. Saru's mother being a victim of this idea blamed her for Dhruva's death. Thus even Dhruva's absence as a non person too creates an emotional crisis for the central protagonist, from which there is no cathartic respite until the close of the plot. Her father's accompaniment Madhav acts the role of a surrogate son to recreate the presence of Dhruva in Saru's psychic realm.

In this novel Deshpande explores the reversal of gender roles in a patriarchal society. What she tries to suggest is that the myth of the authoritative male figure is detrimental for the individual development of both the genders. Manu's sadism is an effect of the societal pressures of gaining a position over his wife which he fails to achieve. While for Padmakar the socially defined role which his wife plays is detrimental to his individual growth as he could never treat her as an equal to discuss his professional crisis, and therefore blames her for his stagnancy. On a similar vein Saru's father because of his lack of authoritativeness suffers the guilt of the disintegration of his family. Infact the novel explores questions like "who is the victim and who is the predator? Are the

roles so distinct so separate? Or are we each of us both?"(144). Continuing the trope of weakness in Indian masculinity in the plot Deshpande's **central** female protagonist further analyses:

There is something in the male...that is **whittled** down and finally destroyed by female domination. It is not **so** with a female. She can be dominated she can submit, and yet hold **something** for herself in reserve. As if there is something in her that prevents **erosion** and self destruction... does the sword of domination hold lethal **only** when a woman holds it over a man? (The Dark, 77)

As Deshpande suggests from the point of view of Saru, **her** brother Dhruva becomes "a creature full of terrors" as he "is dominated by two **females**", his over protective mother and his rival sister. While her father and Manu are **reduced** in status by their respective wives.

## ii)The Male "I" and the Problematics of Anti-Hero in Roots and Shadows.

Questioning the sanctity of the institution of marriage **within** the codes of societal norms has been a consistent engagement with Shashi Deshpande. Roots and Shadows showcases a similar query within a traditional joint **family** structure of a Brahmin household. A clear marker of alienation is present in the **marginal** male subjects in this novel. Many of them are aberrant elements in the huge **family** structure.

The narrative moves back and forth in the **manner** of stream of conscious technique, through the mind of the chief female subject, **where** little direct narrative stance is offered to the male "I". The plot begins with **the** central protagonist Indu's return to her ancestral home after the death of Akka, one of **the** archetypal matriarch's in Deshpande's novels. Akka a rich childless widow becomes a tyrant and dominates too much authority on family matters. Atya and other family members eulogize her as a leader, who assures happiness to everybody. Akka becomes indispensable to the family

while the enforced subjugation and poverty of other women of the family results in their mental, moral, and physical inferiority. It is Akka who makes Indu come back despite being the fact that it was she herself who had resisted vehemently Indu's inter-caste marriage with Jayant. It apparently seems ironical that Akka leaves all her wealth to Indu, even though there were many well deserving candidates in the family. The plot unfolds through Indu's memories of episodes and events of the past that intertwine with one another to recreate pictures of childhood, of living the house, of coming back and the on going conflicts of her marital life. The crux of this novel is the hiatus between traditional orthodoxy and the inculcated values of modernization despite the apparent liberatory factors has its own discontent in imposing a norm. Thus the narrator says:

We Indians can never get away from the caste. We have rejected the old ones, we have embraced new one. Do I think myself as a Brahmin? Rarely if ever. But I am the educated, intelligent, urban middle class. We have our own rules, our own patterns, to which I adhere as scrupulously as Atya and Kaki observe their fast and Pujas. (R&S, 58)

Shashi Deshpande has been much criticized for confining her novels to the lives of educated urban middle class subjects, but rather than endorsing such a life, she tries to depict that even such a position is confined to its own orthodox modes of functioning.

Masculine narratives structure the family and figure out the discourses of protection. Despite the absence of an all encompassing male narrative in Deshpande, one can interpret the theoretical construction in her narrative of an archetypal masculinity, and of discourses associated with that narrative which construct masculinist interventions in the social world as care and Protection. But her construction of masculinity tends to problematize the standard masculinist ways of subjectivity in their latent anti-heroic tendencies. To be more precise her marginal male subjects contribute to the making of the subjectivities of all those who are the incomplete and the lacking 'others' of patriarchy's male hero. This particular novel also contributes to the construction of an internalized and unconscious compliance with the structures of patriarchal order



depending on its objects and subjects, recognizing, acknowledging and living what patriarchy constructs as their lack in ways which make them desire its cure.

The characteristic feature of most of the male characters in Roots and Shadows is a kind of passivity, which transgresses from the ideals conventionally prescribed for a patriarchy's male hero such as bravery and responsibility. Except Kaka, Indu's paternal uncle none of the male members show active interest in the matters of the family, yet Kaka too acted almost as a pawn to the caprices of the matriarchal figure Akka. Among the non-conformists, there is Indu's father who occasionally visit the family, Indu's distant cousin Naren, who through his disregard for the norms of the family is almost an outsider to it. And the orphan boy Vithal, though he is given shelter and food is not a part of the family. The character of Indu's husband Jayant is unfolded mainly through the discontents of their married life. The conversation between Jayant and Indu shows that Jayant had a preconceived idea about womanhood in Indu, but later when that stereotype was broken, he could not come in terms with the real Indu. Thus commenting whether she would shed tears in typically feminine manner for her cousin Mini's wedding he said:

You and tears you know Indu, when I first saw you, I thought you a frail little creature. Now I know you better. You are indomitable. (R&S, 5)

Jayant compared this indomitable nature in Indu to that of Akka, and considered the same a viable reason for Akka's choosing Indu as her heir. Thus he said "...new pillars take the place of the old. You are a pillar now yourself, don't you know". (11)

Mini, Indu's cousin one of the non thinking female subjects in Deshpande's novels, who so long carried the burden of being an old spinster was finally getting married. Her groom according to Indu was not a desirable match, thus she regarded the marriage as a victimization of Mini. But Jayant with his stereotypical notion of endorsing female weakness, as a virtuous credit euphemistically turned Indu's concept of victimhood to a valorization of inner strength in the patience of femininity. Thus he said:

Don't feel sorry for her Indu. She looks like a victim but what I feel. It seems to me that the weak have their weapon just as the strong and these women... I don't know if you can really call them weak. They have inner strength we know very little of. (R&S, 16)

Such stereotypes are produced in male thinking as an outcome of patriarchal foundation which creates a weak female subject for patronizing male dominance over them. Though Jayant is not represented as an overt perpetrator of repression, the author tries to hint at him the tendencies of a dominant male subjectivity through Indu's musings. A potentially gazing male subject is recreated in Indu's introspection at the loss of her individual identity in complying with Jayant's wishes. In her professional life she suffered because owing to Jayant's wishes she was allowed to practice only a particular format of writing which was less substantial and more artificial, embellishing the pages of a women's magazine. While in her sexual life she had to repress her desires because Jayant considered passion in woman as a non feminine attribute. Indu defines herself as an anachronism on the sexual plane as "a woman who loves her husband too much... and is ashamed of it." (92) She interprets her relation with her husband thus:

We're on different planes. He chooses his level. And I ... try to choose the one he would like me to be on. It humiliates me. (R&S, 90)

R. Mala reads this predicament in Indu as a kind of sexual alienation, where she hesitates to show her physical love for her husband lest it would shock him to find a woman initiating the sexual act. This sexual paralysis deepens when she pretends to be passive and unresponsive. The following monologue by Indu will indicate how the male subject within the institution of marriage exercises the capacity of putting the female "I" at crisis:

When I look at mirror, I think of Jayant. When I dress I think of Jayant....always what he wants. And I can't blame him...and one day I thought isn't there anything I want at all? Have I become fluid, with no shape no form of my own? At that moment a strange truth had stared at the face, without wants there is no 'I'. (R&S, 49)

Throughout the plot only a shadowy outline of Jayant's character has been portrayed, with much inadequate matter for construction of patriarchy's male hero or it's other.

The most important male subject in this novel is **Naren**, Indu's distant cousin who can be read as the potential 'other' of patriarchy's **male hero**. Deshpande intricately draws the trends of alienation in Naren's subjectivity, **although** the same is not visible in Jayant. Shashi Deshpande in her essay "On **writing** a novel" speaks about her construction of the male subject in Naren:

I knew how Indu felt about Naren **when** he shoved aside that slick, handsome young hero of mine and **announced** himself to me with a touch of childish arrogance---I' am the **villain**. I could almost hear him **chortling** gleefully at my chagrin, this **irresponsible** malicious sometimes cruel man. Villain? That's sheer bombast. But **what** is he then? Indu's lover? Her alter ego? Her male counterpart? **Only** a male can be so detached. No woman can ever achieve it (R&S, 35).

Naren acts as a foil to Jayant, to whom Indu **adheres** for both emotional and **physical** companionship. Naren, a distant family cousin of **Indu** lives in the same joint **family** which forms the traditional edifice of the story. **Musing** on her construction of the unusual character in Naren, Deshpande in her essay "**On Writing of a Novel**" remarks:

I knew how Indu felt about Naren **when** he shoved aside that stick handsome young hero of mine and **announced** himself to me with a touch of childish arrogance----I am the **villain**, I could almost hear him **shouting** gleefully at my chagrin, this **irresponsible**, malicious, sometimes cruel man. Villain? That's sheer bombast. But **what** is he then? Indu's lover? Her alter ego? Her male counterpart? **Only** a male can be so detached. No woman can ever achieve it. (Dhawan, 35)

By depicting a sexual relationship **between them** Deshpande is making a **radical** attempt to debunk the rigid values against **incest** and transgression. Naren **serves as** Deshpande's mouthpiece for posing a blatant **critique** of the hypocrisy of **normative** codes of live which enslave individual will. **He doesn't** hesitate to taunt the **matriarchal**

figure of Akka as the “old witch” and out rightly remarked that the woman’s magazine for which Indu worked dealt with plastic issue of femininity. He tried to break the veneer of ideal womanhood and the mask of a faithful wife in Indu by his overt declaration of physical orientation towards her:

Tell me Indu, why do you fight against your womanhood so much? ...you can’t prevent a man from wanting to do this... Are you such a faithful wife ... Are you so pure?( R&S, 178-180)

Such provocations compelled Indu to break out of her sexual paralysis in marriage, and attain ecstatic satisfaction out of an extramarital affair with Naren. Naren was a misfit in the family. Indu blamed him as an egoist because he was so involved with his ‘own dear self’ that he hardly cared what was going with others, totally indifferent to significant issues such as selling of the house. Yet it was the same irresponsible Naren to who Indu clung at the time of crisis. Though being an MA in economics with good job prospects, instability formed the core of his existence. Defining himself as a rolling stone which gathers no moss he said:

I don’t have trouble getting jobs. But I don’t have any trouble losing them either. Nobody seems inclined to keep me for long. (R&S, 86)

Naren was always looked down upon the family members in comparison to Indu’s other cousins Sumant and Hemant. Thus after getting his first job he remarked:

It seemed terrible then to be an outsider. Not to belong...it was a crime, and then I used to think...I’ll show them. I’ll show all of them...and when I got my job, my first one...how pleased grandfather was... I had beaten Hemant and Sumant. It was making up for the slights, the humiliations, the rebuffs. One day I asked myself what I am trying to do why the hell should I do something to impress people I don’t care a hang about. And that day Indu I knew I was free. I didn’t want to belong. I didn’t want to

be envied. I didn't want to be admired. I just want to live the way I felt like, the way I desired. (R&S, 114)

This alienation from the normal codes of life, the sense of "disbelonging", hints at the tendencies of a certain existential angst in Naren's psyche. Naren an orphan was brought up under the care of his grandfather who was a dependent in the huge joint family. Disjunctions with his grandfather had started when Naren refused to continue his humiliating existence within the family and opted to move out, while his grandfather denied. He confessed before Indu his failure as a grandson:

He's become old and frail. And cantankerous. And I am no comfort to him. A waster of a grandson....he's ashamed of me. No I am wrong. It hurts him to see me like this. But I can't change, can I Indu? A person has to go his own way... (R&S, 28)

Despite the obvious markers of anti- heroic tendencies in Naren because of his unconventional ways of leading life, he is in no way a misanthrope. Rather he himself indulges in a self proclaimed act of altruism by offering himself as a groom for Mini:

I really felt sorry for her...the way they were desperately parading her before every eligible man. And then being refused for one reason or another. So I said to kaka "I don't mind marrying". (R&S, 84)

But his altruism was all in vain, as Akka, the matriarch didn't deem him to be a fit son-in-law because of his erratic ways. But none in the family realized that his erratic nature was an outcome of the lack of love and acceptance for which they were responsible. Naren's objectivity about the affairs of life pertained to love as well and he considered it nothing more than a physical contact:

I have a theory about contact Indu. I mean literal contact. People touching each other. We always need it. Babies crave to be touched by the mother, a parent. Then we move away from the family to generalized contact. Have you seen boys and girls going about, their arms round each other?

Later the craving gets a focal point. You want to be touched by, to touch one person of the other sex. It gets magnified and exaggerated beyond proportion. (R&S, 160)

Naren's anti-foundationalist approach to life is also reflected in the kind of music that he loved and practiced. The heterodoxy of the *bhakti* songs of Meerabai and others appealed Naren and offered him a route to escape reality through a submersion of his self in music:

Its not god... what intrigues me is something else. Did they the composers, immerse themselves in God out of disgust for humanity? Or, was that love of God just an extension of their love for human beings? ... after all isn't it much more easier to love an unseen celestial being rather than the human beings we see around us...its seems a kind of escape from reality to me. (R&S, 170)

The motif of water as a sign of death is a consistent imagery in Deshpande. Most of her male subjects are characterized by an absent mother. Water also represents the womb, perhaps by submerging in the water body the lost connection with the archaic mother's body is metaphorically recreated where union is only possible at the level of death. This is one possible reading for Naren's death by drowning in the tank near the Shiva temple where he parodied "a ritual dip everyday like a good Brahmin" to wash away what he called his "private devils". If seen from the Levinasian perspective of existential phenomenology, 'Eros' in terms of Naren's libidinal desires for Indu acts as one of the most significant 'other' which finally orients him towards his death. Naren who throughout his life suffered from a fear of water finally committed suicide by drowning and Indu could hardly express her emotional outburst at his death. She felt that even his dead body seemed 'detached' and remote, far removed from all emotions.

Arthur Schopenhauer in the section "On Death" in Vol. II of The World as will and Representation writes, "Without death there would hardly have been any philosophizing".

Schopenharian pessimism can be marked in Deshpande's novels because death both natural and unnatural forms an integral part of them. In the depiction of Naren's death, Deshpande's technique comes close to the model of exomologiesis where the theories and practices of penance are elaborated around the problem of the man who prefers to die rather than to compromise. Exomologiesis as Foucault explains is a way to show that one is able to renounce life and self and thereby face and accept death. But if we recall suicide after an act of sexual transgression most of the time the victims are women, e.g. Tolstoy's Anna, Flaubert's Madam Bovary, Kate Chopin's Edna and so on. Deshpande in showing the burden of guilt taken over by Naren through the suicide subverts the whole stereotype of a female bearing the burden of a joint act of illegitimate copulation. Neither the sexual act nor the weird situation of Naren's death could arise any sense of guilt in Indu.

Naren's alienation and death though can be read from the existential negativity of 'being' and 'nothingness' psychological ramifications can also be added to it. Even Freud in his famous work Ego and the Id says that the libidinal instincts or Eros carries along with it death instincts. Following a Freudian argument Lacan in his The Mirror Stage says that the contradiction of the specular "I" with a narcissistic and social "I" governed by reality principle leads to paranoiac alienation. Lacan says in such a state of neurosis altruism or idealistic reformism holds more ground. An altruistic gesture can also be marked in Naren at one point of time when he proposes to marry Mini to save her from the humiliation of sisterhood. But the rejection of his proposal aided more to his social alienation. Again Naren debunks the whole idea of idealistic attempts towards reforming an individual self as well as the society when he tells Indu:

Why I smoke, the truth is I do it so that some woman has the pleasure of reforming me. All women are reformers at heart. Look at you no...all are to reform womanhood (R&S, 150).

Through such a statement, Deshpande adds gloss to the concept of reforming womanhood. By taking Naren as a mouthpiece she tries to show how a certain section of

educated males try to keep themselves alienated from such a project by prejudicing the same from a parodist angle.

Another very marginally drawn male character is Indu's father, Govind, and even passing references is enough to reinforce patriarchal standards in him. As Indu remarks:

Whenever I see the word adamantite I think of Father. Does it mean hard like diamond. I don't know but that is what Father is, despite his seeming softness, his apparent helplessness. How else he could have parted leaving me, a fifteen day old motherless baby, with the family he hated and despised? He had not even come to see me until I was more than a year old. But that perhaps was because I was a girl. If I had been a son ...

(R&S, 163)

Alienation, in terms of a nonchalant behavior regarding social and family responsibility is also a significant marker of Govind's subjectivity. His sporadic ways of earning was always a mystery to his family. Perhaps it is this nonconformist attitude which brought him closer to Naren. Once Naren remarked about her Father to Indu, "He's so complete a person. There is no piece missing in him. No piece in the wrong place." Govind was the only person in the family who never considered Naren as an outsider. Despite his otherwise total indifference to family issues like distribution of property, sale of the house and so on, Govind never hesitated to come out openly to fight for Naren's cause. Even with his son-in-law Jayant, Govind had a cordial relationship despite their completely contradictory natures the former methodical and a perfectionist while the latter sort of a vagabond, perpetually confused about his work. His objective and detached relationship with his daughter was gender based which makes him a conformist within patriarchy in his otherwise unsocial life.

Contrary to the character of Govind, his elder brother Anant, Indu's Kaka, works out the role of a dutibound responsible male subject as constructed by the discourses of Care and Protection by patriarchy. Saving the traditional house and getting his daughter



Mini married was the chief concern with **Kaka** after Akka's death. **Kaka is not an authoritative figure** despite the fact that **he carries out his duties with full responsibility**. Perhaps his lack of authoritativeness is **one of the reasons behind Akka's decision of choosing Indu as heir for proper allocation of her wealth rather than offering the same to Kaka**. It is because of his inherent softness of **nature** that, inspite of being **strongly rooted** to his tradition; he was the only person **from the family besides Indu's father, who attended her inter-caste wedding with Jayant**.

Lastly the androgynous subject of the **individual self** or human ego is **expressed** through the narratorial 'I' of the old uncle, **Naren's grandfather**. The actual plot is the disjunction of familial ties on the basis of **division of property** and the old uncle **remains a silent and neutral spectator to the whole show**. **He thus remarks:**

It is easy now to dissolve the tie. So what's left? An individual? Is that what we should live for...ones **own self?** (R&S, 105)

Emphasizing on the invincible human ego **Deshpande** through the **androgynous philosophical notions of Old Uncle** quotes **Russian writer Pushkin**: "*Not all of me shall die*. There shall be something of me left" (108). **Yet inspite of his faith on the individual self Old uncle feared loneliness as he confessed before Indu:**

I don't know why, but my **mind** keeps harping on this theme of detachment and loneliness. Will I never reach that stage ... No passions, no emotions, an unruffled placidity? **My** recurring day dream, into which I retreat during the time of stress...**me**, lying in bed, wearing glasses and reading, tranquil, detached, unshakeable. (R&S, 108)

The failure in Old uncle's subjectivity is his lack of **authority**, a common predicament suffered by most of **Deshpande's male subjects**. Taking the blame of **Naren's recklessness on his shoulder's he confesses:**

...it's all my fault. I spoilt him, I know. Never forced him to do anything he never wanted to. Now he is incapable of living by any rules. It is as if

he has no ballast. Gives up good jobs for no reason at all. Wastes his time doing nothing. (R&S, 108)

Deshpande brings in a classical allusion to the Indian epic Mahabharata by referring Old Uncle as Bhisma and Naren as failed Arjuna. By this comparison of Naren to Arjuna the whole gendered concept of the construction of a hero is problematized. Again the Arjuna Krishna relationship is recalled Naren's quest for faith through music, through songs of Krishna. There is a submersion of subjectivity in music when he remarks, "music fills me and there is no more I just the music". Yet the irony is that it is not in music that his subjectivity is submerged, but in death by drowning, which can be symbolically termed as disillusionment of a failed hero's faith.

Thus in my analysis of Roots And Shadows I come across three forms of male "I". First is the dominant or the normative male "I" in Jayant which puts the female "I" at crisis. Second is the subversive male 'I' in Naren with anti-heroic tendencies in whom the female "I" sought solace. Finally the androgynous individual self, seeking peace, is depicted in the speaking "I" of Old Uncle, a silent interlocutor in terms of circumstantial crisis. The rejection of the norm or the dominant for the subversive male "I" is a trope which recurs in the lives of the central female protagonists of Deshpande. This can be located as a resistant mode to reject the power nexus through subversion.

### iii) Legitimization crisis in the central protagonist and the male "I" in That Long Silence.

Legitimization crisis is a problem constantly faced by most of the central female protagonists of Shashi Deshpande dominantly from the male front. It is seen that the male subjects in the nature of fathers, brothers, husbands or lovers perennially act as the

legitimizing agents in the personal and **professional** growth of the **female subject**. Thus the male "I" though marginalized in **terms** of narrativity, yet by being a constant legitimizing agency reinforces **patriarchal** standards in the otherwise **predominant** feminine space of the narratives. Her Sahitya Academy award winner That Long Silence is a classic example in this regard.

This novel deals with the **predicament** of an Indian wife muted by the internalization of patriarchy. Once again **critiquing** marriage, Deshpande through her central protagonist Jaya calls a married couple a 'pair of bullocks yoked together'. Mohan, Jaya's husband the supreme authority of her married life was always **indifferent** to things that did not concern him, thus **the simple** desires of Jaya remained **unattended**. Mohan believed in the utilitarian values of **things**, anything extraneous was **useless** for him. He was never affected by anything **that wouldn't** concern him his family or his job so Jaya was surprised when she saw a **sense of being threatened** by Mohan's reaction to a group of protesting widows. The sense of a **forthcoming danger** brought about a **drastic** change in Mohan which Jaya defines in the **following** words:

What was new was the **frightened** man who looked out from **behind this** wall of indifference. All his **assurance** had deserted him... **the old self** vanished leaving behind a **sad** bewildered man...a **sad** **obsessed** man reconciled to failure. (TLS, 8)

The crisis in the family began with certain **professional hazards** of Mohan who was an engineer, subsequently leading to a **tremendous** change in Mohan's subjectivity **guided** by the traditional myth of a responsible "supermale". An inquiry was to be **made against** him, but instead of accepting his own fault he **transferred the blame** on to his **colleague**, Aggrawal. But nonetheless he accepted the **latter's** suggestion to take an escape route to postpone the crisis, by shifting their residence for sometime. Thus Mohan decided to shift to an unused flat in Dadar which belonged to **Jaya's** maternal uncle. Mohan assumed that Jaya would follow him unquestioningly in the role of a *pativrata*. Even though Jaya initially aided in his escapist policy by sending the children on a holiday and her

accompanying him to the isolated Dadar flat, soon that methodical obedience gave way to resistance, when she finally broke her “long silence” as a wife. Devoid of his professional responsibilities Mohan was depersonalized in Jaya’s vision:

Deprived of his routine, his files, his telephone, his appointments, he seemed to be no one at all; certainly not that man, my husband around whose needs and desires my own life revolve. There was nothing for me to do ... my career as wife was in jeopardy (TLS, 24-25).

Mohan’s depersonalization inversely affected Jaya’s own role as a dutiful wife. Mohan’s mild criminal offence in his profession breaks the very foundation of his own persona of a dependable protective husband, which subsequently leads Jaya to loose her career as a wife. With satisfaction she observes “suhasini was dead”, who was hitherto present with as the ‘other’ forced on her identity by her husband. Evoking mythical and feminist models for her future behaviour, Jaya realizes that she can no longer be the blindfolded Gandhari(61)who accepted blindness to be the *Pativrata* but must emulate Maitreyi(TLS, 25) instead, who dared to scorn security in order to gain knowledge of the Brahman or self.

A “husband is a sheltering tree” is a constantly used refrain (73, 67, 173) in That Long Silence. As sheltering trees act as a wall between the self and the world, Jasbir Jain rightly points that Jaya experiences all these feelings and emotions as she sees her mother widowed by her father’s death and she herself feels inhibited by Mohan’s dreams, which imprison her and reduce her area of freedom .The job she wanted to take, the baby she wanted to adopt, the anti-price campaign she wanted to join, none of these actions undertaken were completed (120). Yet when Mohan goes away for some time and she, overcome by fears of his having abandoned her, is terribly shaken, “was it impossible for me to relate to the world without Mohan? A husband is a sheltering tree.” When Mohan leaves her alone in the Dadar flat she has her apprehensions about how people would reaction towards her, “with pity? Contempt? Or, most frightening thought, without the barrier Mohan had raised between me and other men?” (TLS, 167)

The masculine ideal of being a responsible man was **the driving force behind** Mohan's action, and he expected the same from his son **Rahul** too. That's why his escapist policy of moving away from his professional crisis **haunted** him with the **pangs** of irresponsibility. Thus he cried out in anguish, "It's not **fair**...when I got a job, I thought my problems were over, but my god look at us now" (TLS, 60).

Mohan's impression of a sense of duty behind filial relations **was ruled** by a hard matter of factness as Jaya describes:

Parents and children—for Mohan the tie was **sacrosanct**. It was not just a question of duty, though that first came to **Mohan**. Even in our worst days he had dutifully sent his father some money in **the first week** of the month, whatever our problems may have been. But **there was** more than just duty in Mohan's theory. To Mohan, parents love **their children** and children loved their children because they were **parents and children**. Period. It was that simple. (TLS, 78)

Deshpande through Mohan poses a critique of the colonized **temperament** of fascination for English as status symbol. This language for some **brings** the hope of a movement from the small town to a metropolitan city. It is Mohan's **desire** for a girl who could speak English or as Jaya's brother puts it, "an educated **cultured** girl" makes him marry Jaya. His own fantasy for an English speaking wife **arises** from the house warming ceremony of his patron where he for the first time comes **across** women who could speak the language as if it was a real language. Mohan himself **had** a deprived childhood and had the humiliating experience of being henchman to his **benefactor**. This gives him a class complex and guides his choice of a convent educated **partner** and the urge for a sophisticated lifestyle, defining his coded notions of **right and wrong** as well as his ideas of respectability. The class dimension in Mohan's masculinity is further reflected when he tries to run away from his past, from the fact that his mother was a cook and his father never made enough to support the family as also from the humiliation that he felt when his education was paid by another. Success is seen by him in terms of his earning, the

posh schools to which his children are sent, the clothes his wife wears, are considered by him as yardsticks for measuring his respectability. This acquired snobbishness in Mohan created a sham in his personality that leads him to imitate anything that had the aura of richness and expected the same from Jaya too:

Buy yourself a couple of good saris ... Don't wear those shabby things, even at home. And why don't you make yourself a nice housecoat—you know like the M.D's daughter wears. (TLS, 61)

Mohan always judged his son's actions in terms of his own relationship with his father. The superego of his dead father ruled through most of Mohan's memories. He remembers in disgust the time when he was harshly treated by his father during his illness, lest he would be spoiled. His father was a staunch patriarch whose authoritativeness dominated the life of his mother and sisters, thus patriarchal standards were ingrained in him from his very childhood. The consensus generating apparatus of patriarchal norms made male dominance a normalcy for Mohan. That is the reason when Jaya showed her anger for some cause in the initial years of their marriage, he found it very unwomanly. Thus he said to her, "My mother never raise her voice against my father however badly he behaved to her" (83) Mohan's disapproval and his distaste for feminine anger forced Jaya to have more control over herself and deliberately pattern herself in the manner of the women in Mohan's family, all muted by male injustice. To Mohan a woman sitting by the fire in hunger, waiting for her husband to come home and eat hot food is the real strength of a woman, but Jaya interprets it as nothing more than despair.

Self absorption formed a central part of Mohan's subjectivity; he was more concerned in his own self than anything else, when he returned back after a tired day's work, he was wholly unsympathetic to the cries of his own child, thus Jaya had to attend to the baby Rahul in the kitchen. The strained father-son relationship which continued till Rahul reached his adolescence was a constant cause of worry for Jaya. Although there are no suggested hints of Oedipus complex, yet Mohan evidently posed as the Superego for

Rahul in terms of authoritativeness over him. His **unsympathetic** reply to Jaya's worry in not getting Rahul's letter while they were in the **Dadar** flat is only an instance of the same:

Rahul? He's only sulking. You have to ignore him. You have to ignore him. I know that boy. It gives him **pleasure** to make us uneasy. (TLS, 77)

Jaya's potential as a writer acted as an **additional** advantage for Mohan to mark their cultured existence. He was proud of her 'Seeta' **stories**, comic episodes in the life of a squatty middle class housewife; an even to be **joocularly** called Mr. Seeta enhanced his pleasure:

My wife is a writer- yes that was **something** to be proud of. A respectable hobby ... I have allowed you to write ... I **was** proud of you. (TLS, 119)

But this encouragement turned into anguish when **Jaya** published a story about a man who could not reach out to his wife except through **her body**. To Mohan she was not a writer but only an exhibitionist. She stopped writing **after that** incident except under her pseudonym. The gradual chasm in their relationship **finally** reached a breaking point when Jaya held Mohan responsible for her identity crisis **as** a writer to which he replied thus:

If ever I'd been irresponsible and callous...**but** I have never been that. I have always put you and the children **first**, I have been patient with all your whims, I grudged nothing. But **the truth** is that you despise me because I've failed. As long I had my job **and** position, it was all right; as long I could give you all the comforts it **was** all right. But now, because I'm likely to lose it all... (TLS, 121)

With this confession of his failure Mohan moved out **without** leaving any news of his whereabouts.

The burden of responsibility vested on the male **subject** is also reflected in the character of Dada, Jaya's elder brother. He was the one **after their** father's death who had

to take on the responsibility of comforting the family. It was solely under his insistence that Jaya had to choose Mohan as her husband so that Dada could have a smooth achievement of finishing his responsibility of getting a sister married with no dowry at all, despite the fact that the groom was an engineer. Dada was a constant source of repose for Jaya, with whom she could share her anxieties. He was the only person who knew the secret of aborting her third pregnancy, a fact completely hidden from Mohan. That's why his moving away from the family to the United States is seen as a betrayal on Jaya's part, because in his going she lost another father figure after her Appa's death. Thus she situates his shift to Chicago as an escape from responsibility similar to their reckless younger brother Ravi:

It was simple both Dada and Ravi had escaped, pinning me down to the position of responsibility. Ravi of course was fluid and irresponsible. I don't suppose anyone, not even Ai who had once doted on him, had expected anything from him. I myself would never have been able to imagine that he would escape so wholly. (TLS, 104)

This act of shedding duties creates a complication in Dada's subjectivity, which depersonalizes his hitherto simple nature as Jaya further analyses:

The façade of sympathy and caring he had always put up was giving way... Dada simple? If he is only what he seems, he is that rare thing, a simple man, with no complications and subtleties about him. But a man who has so successfully evaded any kind of involvement with people all his life cannot be that simple. (TLS, 105)

Dada's alienation from the family roots to the wider world can also be judged as a part of the postcolonial dream of moving out from the periphery to the centre. A similar dream was shared by Appa in terms of his wish to send Jaya to Oxford after her graduation with English as her honors subject. More than the colonial burden of endorsing English, there was a progressive and liberal attitude behind Appa's sending all his children to a convent school when he said to his conservative wife,



“Let them learn good English. Its going to **be** more useful to them than **being good Brahmins (90).**” The notion of developing a **special identity** was ushered in **Jaya** by Appa when he assured her “you are going to **be** different from the others **Jaya**”. But Appa’s sudden death turned futile her career **dreams** to eventually end up in **marriage** with Mohan. This is an instance of an early **departure** of a progressive male **subject** from the plot to bring about a crisis in the life of the **central** protagonist. Appa’s death **created** a deep existential crisis in Jaya’s psyche which **she** **defines** in the following words:

One morning, soon after Appa’s **death** I woke up and remembered **that** he is dead.and I had a sense of **loss** that was not vague but **specific**. I thought of the place where he **should** have been at that moment, his bed. And with a picture of his **absence** from that bed, there was a **terrifying** sense of emptiness in me. I felt **that I had** not known till that moment **what** death what his death really meant. **Blankness**. Nothingness. (TLS, 66)

Another instance of a progressive male **subject’s** convenient erasure from the **plot** is through the mysterious death of Kamat. Much **before** Mohan’s losing the job, **when** the writer in Jaya faced a crisis her relationship with **Kamat** offered her some solace. This is a prominent trope in Deshpande’s novels. **When** her female protagonist faces **conflict** from one male front, she nourishes her strength from another. At this ground her protagonist can be critiqued for facing legitimization crisis from the other gender, which further intensifies her male dependency rather than a **defiant** and rebellious feminine self. Kamat a neighbour of Jaya with whom she **shared** a friendship without physical orientation, related her name to her face:

Jaya your name is like your face ... **small**, sharp, clear ... only your eyes don’t have that exactitude. (TLS, 14)

This was so as the real and victorious Jaya was lost in the new role of wifhood in Suhasini, the name imposed on her by Mohan. It was this victorious Jaya who Kamat sought for in her face. Kamat mocked the stereotypical role played by woman as caring wife or mother when he said:

Making others dependent on you, it increases your strength of power. And that's what you really want, all you bloody looking after others, caring for others women. (TLS, 84)

It was Kamat who imbibed in Jaya the attitude of professionalism and inspired her to make her writing unrestrained when he asserted:

Why don't you use your anger in that story? There's none of it here. There isn't even a personal view, a personal vision ... spew out your anger in your writing women ... why are you holding it in. (TLS, 147)

It is chiefly through Kamat's radical views that Deshpande debunks the conventional self pitying attitude characterizing the fragilities of socially constructed roles of femininity:

I'm warning you beware of this "women are victims" theory of yours. It'll drag you down into a soft bog of self pity. Take yourself seriously woman. (TLS, 148)

Jaya defines Kamat's entry into the plot as a surprise where he seemed to be "ruthlessly elbowing into this story" with his vehement refusal to be left out. Kamat is shown in the plot as an essentially lonely person, living alone in a flat while his children settled abroad. So haunting was his loneliness that he had died absolutely alone only to be discovered much later by his neighbors. Kamat acted as a father figure in terms of nourishing Jaya's writing potential, and his mysterious death filled her with a similar existential crisis like the one she faced after her Appa's death. Deshpande by positing a male I through Kamat tries to offer a mouthpiece against the anti-professionalism and the fear of failing in woman writers. But she could not do justice to his character as he had to meet a sordid end through death. Is she trying to suggest that an alternate masculinity that rejects the ideal womanhood can't have a longer life? Thus instead of posing a viable and continuous resistance isn't she reaffirming the same patriarchal norms by making the male subjects like Kamat and Appa face an early erasure from the plot.

A sense of disbelonging and distance forms another recurrent motif in the male subjectivization by Deshpande. Though Mohan too followed an escapist policy for convenience he was not an alienated figure. His final telegram “all well” showed direct possibilism of his return to the normal pace of life. Tendencies of alienation can be marked in Jaya’s younger brother Ravi which created disjunction with his wife Asha. In another marginally constructed male subject Makarand Mama, tendency of alienation is marked in an alternate way. Her central protagonist Jaya marks a narcissistic streak of self prepossession in Makarand Mama in terms of the number of self photographs decorating the walls of his Dadar flat’s Mohan’s escapade. Makarand Mama had alienated himself from his family to become an actor. Jaya defines him in the following terms:

He, who had been the scorned, the despised failure, had become that familiar cliché—the Tragic Genius who died young, unrecognized by stupid, cruel world. (TLS, 46)

Through this shadowy character of Makarand Mama Shashi Deshpande hints at the problematic and the social ethics behind the construction and legitimization of the figure of a hero. In the delineation of this character Deshpande boomerangs the problem of alienation in human subjectivity to the society, rather than blaming it on human self.

Thus complication of male “I” in That Long Silence can be summarized as follows. Firstly the male “I” in Mohan comes in opposition to the development of feminine subjectivity. Secondly there is the supportive male “I” in Kamat and Appa which again exposes the legitimization crisis in Deshpande’s central protagonist. Moreover the narrative convenience of the early erasure of such progressive men from the plot indicates a lack of positive stance in the author which pushes the narrative back to the phallogocentric trap. Thirdly the problem of social alienation through the subjectivization of Ravi and Makarand Mama and to some extent Kamat shows an andocentric tendency of problematizing ones social existence as a whole.

#### iv) The Male “I”, Perversion and Metaphor of Rape in Binding Vine.

In Binding Vine which apparently deals with the metaphor of rape the male “I” in terms of narrativity is totally sidelined. This novel depicts a perversion of the male libido in the act of rape, including marital rape which acts fatal for its victims. The two overtly dark male figures in the novel are not given a voice, but the perversion of their respective subjectivity are mediated by the heinous act of rape itself. The male “I” here is not directly mediated but delineated in relational terms as perpetrators of crisis in the female subject. The two forms of male perversions is exhibited through the legal rape of Mira and, euphemistically presented as obsession in the brutal rape of Kalpana where the sign of the rapist’s perversion is crudely marked in her body as she lays “half dead half alive” in a state of coma. One cannot undermine the class disparity in the treatment of the two forms of male disorders by the author, as Kalpana’s rapist belongs to the lower wrung of society, while Mira’s husband had the refinements of his privileged class.

The novel begins with the central protagonist and the narrator Urmila, grieving for the sudden death of her infant daughter Anusha. Unlike Indu and Jaya in the other two novels it is not male support which helps her out of crisis, but it is rather two projects which reawakens her interest in life. First is the discovery of a diary and some poems in Kannada by her mother-in – law Mira who died right after giving birth to her son and Urmila’s husband Kishore. And second is her involvement in solving the mystery behind Kalpana’s rape case by providing unflinching help to the victim’s mother Shakuntala, commonly known as Shakutai. In the first case it through her preoccupation in translating Mira’s poems and by the mediation of Akka, Kishore’s stepmother that the perversion in Kishore’s father is delineated. Thus Urmila says:

Akka's story tells me much about **the man**, the intent **single-mindedness** with which he went about **marrying Mira**, shows me **the quality of his** obsession for her. (BV, 64)

It is interesting to note that Mira's perpetrator is not given any name, perhaps a subversive attempt by the writer to depersonalize **him**. The shrewdness of his **pursuit for** possessing Mira as if she was an object is **exposed in his** calculative moves of **furthering** his craze to a marriage proposal:

He saw her at a wedding and fell in **love** with her. After that he became a man in a single-minded pursuit of **an object**: marrying Mira. It was not very easy. He could not propose **directly** to her, he knew his mother would never countenance such a marriage. Nor could he ask his parents to propose her on his behalf—such a **thing** was not done. And so went at it **deviously**; and it is more than **anything else** gives a clue to his feelings, his tenacity. He induced a mutual friend to **suggest** his name to Mira's parents as a possible groom for their **daughter**. After this was done, they went through the whole complicated process of settling a marriage- he had to conceal his eagerness from his **parents** through it all- and they were married. (BV, 47)

The issue of marital rape under which Mira was **repeatedly** victimized formed the basic content of her poems. Though Mira tried to **voice** her sufferings through her Kannada poems, they remain hidden and unpublished until Urmila took the task of translating them into English. Urmila's friend Priti, a **feminist** filmmaker, ventured to offer an ideological content to a married woman's **own body** by making a film on Mira. The feminist agenda which is never powerfully **voiced in** Deshpande's novels is once again exhibited in terms of Urmila's inhibitions as to **how her** father-in-law would be projected in Priti's film and what would be her take as a **script** writer:

And the man? Perched beside Priti on her **feminist** soap box. I know what I'd have had to make of him: brutal, **insensitive** man. Perhaps he was insensitive but brutal? (BV, 52)

This introspection goes against the grain of rape in marriage theory, thereby depriving the same of its radical content. This recurrent trope of the protagonist's inhibitions in terms of resistance reaffirms the patriarchal standards that engulf them as well as the author herself. Moreover Vana, Kishore's stepsister, despite being a social worker had a conservative view over the whole issue of Kalpana's rape. Further she totally disagreed to Urmi's project of exposing her father's obsession for his first wife fearing social embarrassment. Vana knew about her father's biases, that he always preferred Kishore to her, yet she could not concede to the issue of marital rape of Mira. Thus another aspect of Mira's obsessive husband is his dislike for his own daughter, by his second wife and his overt preference for his son by his first wife. Infact he remarried just because he wanted someone to take care of his infant son. Vana was simply non-existent for her father, she says, "My father expected nothing from me. I wonder he knows I exist" (BV, 53). Urmila ruminating over the last images of her father-in-law whom she knew from her childhood as her best friend Vana's father, could clearly recall his bias for his daughter:

I remember I always felt a little sorry for him; my last memories of him are of a pathetic, faded ghost-like man in a wheel chair. Before that he had been a cheerful kind of man, hopefully offering us jokes that were hard to laugh at...Vana however never failed to laugh at his jokes...was it sycophancy? May be she laughed so that he would notice her. But he never did. For him there was only Kishore. (BV, 52)

Urmi's relation with her own father comes in complete contrast to that of Vana. Urmi had a very friendly relation with her father despite his being an authoritative person. He is not given a definite identity in the novel, as Deshpande didn't see it as necessary to nomenclature him, throughout the novel he is relationally identified as Papa. He was a strict disciplinarian with staunch utilitarian values, never happy with his children's indulgences in watching movies as he considered them to be all rubbish. Yet there was something deeply practical about his attitude to life, as he once said to Urmi, "you have to believe in the normality of things. Otherwise living becomes impossible." (BV, 77)

Though he was quite liberal with respect to his daughter's education and his acceptance of her choosing Kishore as her life partner, he was a somewhat dominant husband. Urmi analyses her father's emotional dominance over her mother when she remarks:

Papa's anger and silence were weapons against which Inni had no defence. At such times, I could sense her constant preoccupation with his feelings, her groping towards him, her hurt when he rejected these overtures. (BV, 81)

Moreover, his sending away Urmi to his mother's place in her childhood was simply out of a sheer distrust that his wife was not capable enough to look after Urmi, because she had once left the baby girl at the care of a male domestic help. Inni later confessed to Urmi how that decision was hard for her:

...he decided he would take you to his mother. He didn't say anything to me, he just took you away. I never imagined he wouldn't bring you back, I thought his was just to teach me a lesson, to punish me, but... I begged him, Urmi, I cried, I promised him I'd never leave you alone, but he would not listen. Nothing could make him change his mind. (BV, 199-200)

In his later years, when he suffered from cancer, a morbid sense of self questioning subjected him. He regretted the fact that he had always kept his daughter away from him when she most needed parental care, by sending her to her grandmother in Ranidurg. But in all these self-questionings he never regretted the fact that he had dominated the emotional realm of his wife completely, in fact his wife too never resisted in her absolute subjection considering it as a trait of immense love for her husband.

Before coming to analyze the perversion of the brutal rapist in the novel, a gloss over the other male characters in the novel is presented below. A very shadowy male subject in the novel is Urmi's husband Kishore. He falls within the category of one of many detached and alienated male subjects within Deshpande's coterie of marginal male

characters. Being in the merchant navy he could hardly stay with his family a few months in the year. Besides that, right from his youth he was a reserved and detached kind of a person. That is the reason why Urmi's family was not very happy when she decided to marry him. Even his own sister Vana had doubts whether Urmi would be able to manage with his objective nature. But Urmi took his detachment as a challenge and her act of walking out on their first night after marriage was a gesture to defy his idea of being trapped in marriage. Thus she says:

And I walked out not just to prove him wrong, though there was that too, but because of the look on his face. It frightened me. He looked trapped. Sometimes I wonder whether Papa had seen this look, whether that was why he dissuaded me from marrying Kishore. (BV, 137)

Kishore though loved Urmi, he could never realize the extent of her desires, because their physical distance also brought an emotional distance in terms of expressing latent feelings. She could never tell him that each time they part; it was like "death" for her. Though Kishore tried to normalize things whenever he rejoined his family after his trips, there was something armored about his existence to which his wife could never reach out?

The whole idea of male gaze over female body as screen can be marked in Kishore's endearments preceding their lovemaking when once he said while Urmila was before the mirror 'come on Narcissus come to bed. Haven't you had enough of yourself?' But these moments of lovemaking were transitory to leave her with an engulfing loneliness after Kishore's departure. At this juncture her friendship with Bhaskar offers some excitement, but it had no sexual orientations from the female's side unlike other extra-marital friendships in Deshpande's world. Bhaskar a doctor came in contact with Urmi through Vana in terms of Kalpana's rape case as he worked in the same hospital where the victim was admitted. Bhaskar's unpretentious and matter of fact manner of putting things brought him close to Urmi. His naïve pleasure in taking Urmi out for dinner, and their lively conversations, regarding their, common sun-sign, and childhood



habits, soon created feeling for her in his heart. **Further**, they shared a common **tragedy** of losing a loved one, Urmi, her infant daughter, **and** Bhaskar his twin sister. A **part of him** was lost with her death, he being a good **tabla player** left it completely when he **lost his** accompaniment with the death of his sister. **Bhaskar's** feelings for Urmi, **despite that she** were a married woman was fuelled by the **fact that** Urmi never discussed her **husband** Kishore in their conversations. Bhaskar's **indulgence** in Urmi exposes the **fact that even** marriage is no guard for male gaze as perceived by social norms. But Urmi **playing the** role of a chaste wife defended herself from **Bhaskar's** advances although her **repressed** sexuality found it hard in not responding. Later **when** Bhaskar moved back, she **regretted** the loss of his friendship, more than that she was **hurt** by his behaviour of a rejected male. Thus she remarked:

He's like all men. If he can't **get** what he wants...But suddenly, thinking of how he looked as he **walked** away- even his back looked desolate- (BV, 170)

Urmi regretted the fact that there can be no casual **friendship** between two members of the opposite sex, because the male gaze comes in **between**, and Bhaskar was no **exception** in sharing that gaze.

Among other minor male characters in the **novel** is Vana's husband Harish and Urmi's brother Amrut. Harish is interpolated in the **plot** mostly through the conversation between Vana and Urmila, which formulates his **nature** to be that of a **demanding** husband. Being a workaholic doctor he had very **less time** to give to his family with all the responsibility on Vana's shoulders despite the **fact** that she too was a **working** woman. Internalizing patriarchal standards, when **on one** occasion of her **younger** daughter's sickness, the elder one blamed Vana for **negligence**, she retorts, "...why is it nobody thinks of blaming Harish? He's never around, **but** it's never his fault."(BV, 75) However, there is no overt depiction of his dominant **nature**; it is only **reflected** in Vana's methodical submission to his disciplinary and practical **manners**, to which Urmi resents. Thus she exclaims:

It irritated me terribly at first, her constant refrain of 'Harish says'. She says it less now, but her submissiveness, her willingness to go along with him in whatever he wants, makes me angry. (BV, 80)

Urmi's only sibling Amrut, in contrast to his father's and Harish's authoritativeness, represents the softer forms of masculinity in the plot. Brought up under a liberal father, Amrut had respect for feminine potential which finds expression in his regards for his mother and sister. Consoling his sister on the death of her infant child he tried to remind her of her inner strength by telling her thus:

People seeing us together think I am the tough guy and you are my delicate sister, they little know it is the other way round. (BV, 22)

Added to this he was much concerned about his sister's career and wanted her to carry on with her Doctorate project to reach higher than just teaching in the under-graduate level, a common dream which even his father shared. Despite the fact that he wanted to go abroad he carried out the role of a dutiful son, by sanctifying his father's wish even after his death by preparing for the IAS. By focusing on the career dreams of Urmi's father which Amrut unquestioningly carried forward Deshpande makes a comment on the bourgeois ideals upheld by the Indian Middle class. Brought up under a patriarchal mindset where his father took the upper hold over his mother, he saw his milder position with relation to his girlfriend quite vulnerable and ridiculous. Thus he questioned:

But if between Radha and me I am weaker... and she dominates, it makes me ridiculous and her hateful. Why is that, Didi? (BV, 133)

Further Amrut became apprehensive when Urmi was intently involved with the rape case of Kalpana. In reaction to a certain sociologist's view that rape can't be done unless the woman is willing, Urmi expresses her disgust by declaring "I think men's mind are public lavatories full of dirty pictures". Hearing such a remark Amrut feared that his sister might become a radical feminist or essentially a man-hater. This reaction of Amrut

exposes the inhibitions against female resistance by certain educated class of men who claim to be progressive in terms of female rights.

The subplot of the novel is Kalpana's story, the victim of a brutal rape, who lies throughout the novel silent and unconsciousness in a hospital. Though her fact of being raped was kept secret by her mother, Urmila in her attempt to gain justice convinced her mother to seek media's help. Once the case was investigated her tormentor could not lay hidden for long, soon it was revealed it was her own uncle, Prabhakar who had done the heinous crime. Prabhakar was the husband of Sulu, Kalpana's aunt and as Sulu revealed before committing suicide that her husband had his eyes on her niece since she was fourteen. His phrase 'my beauty' to praise her; marks the initial obsession of his 'male gaze' which later turned violent. Shakubai, Kalpana's mother, a woman deserted by her drunkard husband had earlier planned to marry off Kalpana with Prabhakar because Sulu was childless. She justified her decision in Sulu's favour thinking it is better that Prabhakar married Kalpana rather than leaving Sulu for other women for her lack. Moreover he was economically well off and never indulged in domestic violence. Thus she remarked:

At least he is not a drunkard or a wife beater or a waster like my husband... he would have treated her like a Queen. (BV, 193)

Shakubai who so long believed that her daughter was dishonored rather than the rapist, received a double shock when her sister committed suicide only to reveal that her husband Prabhakar was the real culprit. Later indulging in self remorse Shakubai remarked:

Sulu says he was mad about Kalpana. Even when Kalpana went to live with them, he tried to... He wanted... she was only a child then, she was fourteen and he thought he could...he used to look at her, he used to say things, he called her "My beauty", he used to praise her looks. I thought he was her uncle, he's being affectionate...I have done great wrong, such great wrong. (BV, 189-190)

Prabhakar whose mad passion was to gain Kalpana for his lustfulness turned bestial when he learnt she decided to marry a guy of her choice. He committed the perverted act of rape, as a kind of deadly revenge for her rejecting him. Prabhakar's character is hardly given any voice. Besides being the rapist, he was also a dominating husband, making life hell for his meek wife with his anger, he even stopped touching her once she started having white patches in her body and diverted his whole pervert attention to Kalpana. When the rape was investigated he told his wife "if the police ask you, tell them I was with you whole evening and night" and this confirmed his crime in her eyes for which she committed suicide. Thus the evil subjectivization as projected in Prabhakar's nature proved fatal for two female subjects, the rape victim and his wife as well.

Thus in Binding Vine male subjectivity is depicted in terms of male gaze. Be it obsession or perversion leading to marital or brutal rape or be it romantic endearments. Here male libido or Eros can't be analyzed in the Freudian terms of carrying death wish as seen in case of Naren. Rather it is male libido which acts fatal for the victimized female subjects.

**v) Complication to Compatibility---- A Paradigm Shift in Small Remedies.**

Small Remedies run around the lives of three women Madhu, the narrator, Savitribai Indorekar whose story Madhu writes and Leela her maternal aunt, leaving the male 'I' with very little complications. Here Deshpande for the first time comes out of the traditional garb to touch on issues such as inter-religious marriage through Joe-Leela relation, political issues such as Bombay riots, in which Madhu's son Adit was killed, and the professional hazards in the life of female singer, who broke away from her marriage to attain her career aided by a Muslim tablist, Ghulam Saab.

Among the peripheral male characters **Madhu's** father holds importance as Deshpande tries to experiment with a sort of **Electra complex**, i.e., sexual affiliations between father and daughter, in her definition about him:

I see my father in myself when I look at the mirror... my dead mother surely is –was –there in him... the **single factor** that marked his identity, the factor that stamped him was his **being a doctor**. (SR, 172)

Further Madhu defines his physical qualities in the **manner** of describing a childhood crush which offers more space for Deshpande's experimentation of Electra Complex:

His looks—he was tall, slim and with an **erect bearing**- did that as well. And there was the motorcycle he used **for his rounds** that gave him a dashing air few men of his age had. **None of the fathers** I knew could be compared to him. When he smoked- and **he was always smoking**- there was an elegance about him... all this **gave him** the debonair air of a hero in the early Hindi movies. The dark **glasses he** invariably wore out-of-doors completed the picture. (SR, 173)

It is this habit of smoking excessively as a kind of death **wish** as adjudged by the central protagonist which eventually caused her father's death by **lung cancer** when she was only fifteen. The fact that he had a mistress was something **which Madhu** never accepted in his lifetime, but his leaving some amount of money for the **mistress** after death proved his loyalty even in an illegitimate relation.

Although her father was never a dominating one, **however**, he had his own codes of following the discourse of Care and Protection vested by **patriarchy**. He never allowed Madhu to watch movies in theatre except occasionally in **his presence**. It is part of this responsibility for his daughter that he unburdened himself **by trusting** her maternal aunt Leela to take charge of Madhu after his death.

Leela's second husband Joe; an Anglo-Indian was **dominantly** characterized by his Englishness, while Leela could never go off her **Marathi** roots. Yet they were compatible. Thus Madhu defines:

I think of Joe and Leela his terrible Marathi, her English almost non-existent. Yet communication between them was perfect. (SR, 40)

Though a doctor by profession Joe's internalizing of English literature was remarkable. All his medical lectures began with a history of the Brontes'. His name itself reminds one of Dickens' famous characters Joe Gargery in Great Expectations. Sharing a postcolonial dream of moving from the periphery to the centre, Joe wanted Madhu to do her MA in English literature and go to Oxford. But Madhu's taking up the vocation of a journalist just after graduation left his dream unfulfilled. "Think of the Brontes" was the catch phrase in Joe's life. Madhu expresses her gratitude to Joe for bringing her close to the English language in the following words:

I have to thank you, I tell Joe. But he disowns his share in my English. Its Dickens he says, and Thackeray and the Brontes all these others whom I need to thank. (SR, 84)

Madhu couldn't go to Oxford, but she describes her going to Haworth later with her husband Som as "like going to Kashi and doing the Pinda ceremony for a parent", because Joe was none but a surrogate father for her. Thus even a pleasure trip to Haworth was like a pilgrimage for Joe's sake.

The complications of the male 'I' appeared with the embitterment of the Som-Madhu relationship which follows more than a decade after their marriage. Madhu came in contact with Som through Tony, Joe's son by an early marriage and a brotherly figure in Madhu's life. Som who believed in the feminine ideals of chastity and purity was shocked to find out the truth about Madhu's physical involvement with a man when she was fifteen. Although Madhu tried hard to explain the pure accidental nature of the act, which was unconsciously repressed in her memory for many years under circumstantial pressure, Som was unyielding. He never tried to understand Madhu's dilemma and emotional trauma which led to the act, to him only the sexual aspect mattered. Thus Madhu says:

Now I know that with my ~~relations~~ I destroyed the girl he married. Suddenly I became a stranger to **Som**, a woman he didn't know. **And that** it was he who changed. From ~~genial~~ easy-going man, he turned **savage**, destructive, hating me, hating **himself**. (SR, 230)

This chasm took them to the verge of separation **and** with the death of their only son **Adit**, Madhu walked out of the relationship. Som's **adherence** to the patriarchal ideal of chastity brought in marital discord, yet he was **not dominant** enough to lead the power nexus between the two. For Madhu equally **exercised** her feminine will to welcome the separation. Instead of focusing the power game **between** the sexes, Deshpande here aims at a compatible mode of reconciliation between **the two** genders. It is Som who **initiates** the process of reconciliation through a letter **asking Madhu** to be with him for the first death anniversary of their son Adit:

It will be a year now. Come home **we need** to be together at this time. We need to mourn him together; **we need** to face the fact of his death **and our** continuing life together. (SR, 323)

It is in this subversion of the subjectivity of "I" **in the** togetherness of "we" that **the** competition in the politics of gender can be resolved.

Another important male subject in the novel is Tony, Madhu's half cousin, an advertising agent by profession. Madhu's first **encounter** with Tony when they were teenagers was an erotic one, when Tony **accidentally** entered her room while she was changing almost fall prey to his libido only to be **stopped** by Madhu's "boxer's punch". Remembering this incident Tony later said:

It was not my fault. Blame my **hormones** that kept me in a state of constant lust, leeching after females... **there** you were in my own house half undressed—even if you were such a **skinny** thing, I could not help myself. It was like it happened **inspite** of me. (SR, 48)

Despite this initial mishap Tony played the role of being a brother throughout the plot with all perfection. Tony who was a “one girlfriend a week” young man became “Mr. Steady” with his marriage to Rekha. For Madhu, Tony was the ‘Protean Man’ who was unflinching, steadfast in his personal relations, constant to the people in his life specially the four woman--- Leela, his step mother, Paula his sister, Rekha his wife and finally Madhu. Further Tony’s admiration for his father Joe led Madhu to jocularly inverse the Freudian concept of Oedipus complex when she says:

I often tell Tony that Freud would turn in his grave if he heard Tony speaking of his father. No resentment, no anger, no grudges. Not for the constant carping, the ceaseless criticism that Joe subjected Tony to. (SR, 206)

Another male subject Chandru, Som’s friend and a neurologist by profession brings in some complications of male ‘I’ in the plot. He is very rigid in his opinions. For him a man and a woman can never be friends, perhaps that was the reason behind his incompatible relations with his wife Sati. The scene between Chandru and Madhu in a hotel in Bhavanipur throws more glimpses on Chandru’s character, when he speaks out against his wife Sati:

She’s got everything- she’s mistress of her home, my poor mother doesn’t say a word to her, she’s got all the money she wants. But no, I have to be villain and she the victim. It’s all this feminism stuff that you women have in your head. ‘Indian men’ she says all the time now. What other men does she know, damn it. (SR, 250)

Chandru blames the embitterment in his married life as the direct consequence of the feminist ideology followed by his wife. He adds:

I can’t be friends with any female, can I because I am married? I can’t speak to any female, that’s it, is it? If Satee were more pleasant, I would not have to, let me tell you that. (SR, 250)



The “I, me, myself” factor in Chandru was the **basic** reason for his discontents in marriage. Once Som’s father asks Chandru to give **the declension** of *Aham*-“I” and he said “*Aham, Aham, Aham*” to which Som’s father **remarked**, “it’s all I to Chandru there’s no “we”, no “us” in his language. This egoism also **brought** certain discontent in his friendship with Som, because his altruistic gesture of **always** offering help to Som, never made him realize that at times it made Som feel smaller.

Another very shadowy male subject in the novel is **Savitribai’s** father-in-law, who with his profound interest in music was a liberal. He **believed** in educating the girls and also took the radical step of allowing his daughter in law to learn music. Thereby he brought the Muslim tabla player Gulam Saab in her life. This gave Bai the impetus to break out of her conventional marriage to carry forward **her professional** dream aided by Gulam Saab. But later while Madhu worked on her **biography**, Bai while giving interviews never acknowledged the fact that she had a **Muslim** lover, Gulam Saab and a daughter by him. But Gulam Saab’s granddaughter **Hasina** who later became Bai’s student had a different picture to present in terms of **Bai’s success** which the former attributed to her Guruji, Kashinath Buwa. Madhu recounting **Hasina’s** version remarks:

There was more according to Hasina. **Gulam Saab** was the one who made Bai known. He met people on her behalf; **he arranged** for her programmes, he made the contacts for her. It was not **easy** for a woman to do these things then; it’s not easy even now, Hasina **adds** after a pause. Without Ghulam Saab, Bai would never have been **able** to manage this part of her professional life. (SR, 274)

Here for the first time in Shashi Deshpande one can mark **the objectification** of a male subject for feminine gain. Bai moved out of her marriage **and eloped** with her tablist more to make a career for her and less for love. But Gulam Saab **because** of his love for Bai left his wife and children only to return back many years later **after his rift** with Savitribai. He was an integral part of her career; of her success and achievements still she didn’t hesitate to entirely wipe him out of her existence in the later part of her life.

Another minor but important male subject in the plot is Hari, who exhibits a fine example of compatibility in gender relations. It is Hari who volunteers to keep Madhu as a guest in his home while in her stay in Bhavanipur for her task of collecting material for Bai's biography. Only after a few days of her stay he reveals the fact that he is her relative from mother's side with Leela being a common paragon of admiration for both. Hari was quite blatant about his dislike for the self indulgent life style led by Savitribai, and wished that Madhu should write rather a biography on Leela. This attitude in Hari is judged by Madhu as similar to Puritanism, or more specifically a disapproving criticism of life. Hari himself being a supporter of the naxalites, was much appreciative of the public figure Leela who was a hard core communist in her hey days. As a husband he was a most undemanding one sharing equally a hand in the household chores with his wife Lata, adding to the quality of a true householder. Moreover the concept of the husband as the bread earner is reversed in Hari-Lata relationship, because Lata was in more secured Bank job while Hari, being inclined to social causes was often engaged in non-permanent projects.

Thus in the analysis of male subjectivity in Small Remedies one can mark an obvious paradigm shift in Deshpande. Here the males are not the sole perpetrators of crisis in the life of the female subject as presented in the rest of her novels. The androgynous project of masculine and feminine compatibility is stressed here instead of the complications of the male "I". One can mark that except Chandru-Satee relationship all others, though not withstanding certain areas of discontent, are delicately bound by male female friendship. Although Bai didn't acknowledge her relationship with Ghulam Saab due to societal pressures, their compatibility on the ground of music can hardly be undermined. Deshpande carries a utopian hope in the submersion of the "I" in the togetherness of "we" and "us" to resolve the complications of gender politics.



## Chapter 3

### Narrativization and the Male “I”

In Deshpande’s world the female protagonist reigns as the central focus while the men are decentered as ‘other’. But in the two novels A Matter of Time and Moving On, she moves out of the general trend by offering a major section of the narrative content to a male “I”. These two novels offer scope to study male subjectivity treated from a female perspective, though Deshpande persistently claims that her gender rules out in terms of narrativization. Despite such a claim the male “I” as functional in the character of Gopal in A Matter Of Time and Baba in Moving On falls within the dimension of relational nexus. That is to say although the speaking “I” opens scope for analyzing Gopal and Baba as independent subjectivities yet their identities become objectified when the writer locates them in relation to the central female protagonist. In both these cases it is the father daughter relationship that raises complications with the male “I”. Perhaps making such a generalization before analyzing these two male subjects in terms of respective plot structure of these two novels might sound reductive, thus to prove my hypothesis I will take into account these two novels separately.

#### **i) The Male “I” and the Burden of Philosophy in A Matter of time.**

In almost all her novels by marginalizing the male voices the author aims at subversion from within, but this subversion can’t succeed as a viable resistant because it reinforces male domination. Keeping this in view I would discuss the complications of male ‘I’ in terms of social responsibilities in A Matter Of Time. The story shows how the chief male protagonist escapes his duties as a father, teacher and husband thereby living his dependent females i.e. wife and three daughters in a state of crisis. Gopal is different from other male characters not only because Deshpande offers him a direct narrative stance but because of his psychological crisis. In professional lines he is unlike Jayant who is a doctor, Mohan who is an engineer and Kishore who is a sailor, though like Manu he too is a college teacher their psychic realms differ. Jasbir Jain rightly puts it:



Gopal is not a neurotic person. He is clear-headed and has a strong sense of values. He also has a strong awareness of environmental influences. Once he had pointed out to Sumi that we are shaped by the age we live in. In that case what is it; Sumi wonders that has turned him into an ascetic in an age of acquisition (27). Gopal's walking out on them dispossesses the whole family. The total dependence of the family is on the male....This gives the husband the choice of moving out of a householder's life. Men can abandon their wives and children with impunity, leaving the dependent to cope up as best as they can. (Jain, 111)

This is the only novel with a third person narrative. The omniscient narrator is androgynous, while other characters speak through dialogues and monologues. Here the male "I" in Gopal is given a direct narrative stance through monologues and it is around him that the whole complication of the plot revolves. In an interview with Sue Dickman while talking about the politics of being a woman writer with Mahasweta Devi, Githa Hariharan, C.S. Lakshmi and Pratibha Ray, Deshpande states:

All these years men have been telling the world in their writing that women, not men are mysterious, women are fascinating, women are strange...so now women are also talking and telling the world that men are strange, men are mysterious...so many of their things we don't understand. (132-33)

Deshpande's male character Gopal very appropriately suits the above mentioned category of a being a mysterious man created by the pen of a woman. Going back to the roots of Indian philosophy Deshpande through the character of Gopal questions the "ashrams" of "Grihastha" and "Sanyas" that form a part of the Hindu male's life, which acts as detrimental to his female counterpart. With such an idea in mind the author began the first part of the novel entitled "The House" with an epigraph quoting from Brahadaranyaka Upanishad(11.41) where saint Yajnavalkya said to his wife Maitreyee "verily I

am about to go forth from this state of householder". Indian Mythology has other examples where wives are abandoned and are expected to give birth to their children and bring them up single handedly e.g. Sita. There are also examples of husbands, like the revered Gautama Buddha, Ramakrishna Paramahansa and so on who turned ascetic leaving all family concerns behind. Tradition never blames these saints as irresponsible towards their wives or acknowledges the crushed desires of the dependent females. Somewhat similar is the plight that Gopal's wife Sumi has to share when her husband leaves her behind financially insecure with her three grown up daughters. But Gopal's character is not simple enough to be reduced just to the division of the phases of "Grihastha" and "Sanyas".

In an interview in Just between us Deshpande throws light on her creation of Gopal:

I never thought about Gopal's gender. He was like a projection of my own thoughts. You put a little bit of yourself in every one of your characters. My earlier male characters, though vivid were in the background, but it was by moving through Mohan in That Long Silence and Bhaskar and Amruth in Binding Vine that I got to Gopal. You never get somewhere straight off. I had to write these other men before coming to Gopal, before making him the focus of the book. His action, which was so inexplicable to everyone, was perfectly clear to me. He may not know exactly why he did what he did, and I know that he does not know. When I was writing him it didn't even strike me as significant that he was a man. (Mennon & Joseph, 59)

From the above statement, the author's ideas of an andocentric tendency can be read, where she deliberately moves out her feminine cloister to portray the complexities of a male subject. Though Deshpande claims to move away from gender concerns the complexities in Gopal's subjectivity cannot be analyzed without acknowledging the fact that he is a male very much rooted to the norms of a patriarchal society. By making the

speaking "I" in Gopal her focal point, the author ventures an androgynous theme of philosophical quest for selfhood at two simultaneous levels first, by debunking traditional philosophy and second by subverting patriarchal pressures. In Gopal she tries to depict that even for the male subject patriarchy comes as an obstacle in the form of a stereotypical masculine ideal of being a caretaker and a bread earner. Gopal by alienating himself from his family basically aimed at shattering this ideal. This shedding away from responsibility is offered a metaphysical dimension through the speaking 'I' in Gopal:

It is a kind of illness, a virus, perhaps which makes one incapable of functioning as a full human being ... I stopped believing in the life I was leading, suddenly it seemed unreal to me and I knew I could not go on (AMT, 41).

Besides the metaphysical dimension, Deshpande moves a step ahead towards western concepts of psychoanalysis by invoking the trends of the Freudian formula of Oedipus Complex in Gopal's subjectivity. Here the Freudian formula operates through dream mechanism in a two fold pattern firstly by disturbing dreams where Gopal is repeatedly haunted by the superego of his father and secondly by dreams of peace. These dreams related to Gopal's past were functional in creating a split in his psyche which eventually led to his detachment. A kind of psychosis can be marked in Gopal when he says:

I am certain that the man who visits me in my dreams is my father. The knowledge belongs not to me, the man I am now, but to the figure in my dream that disembodied self who is always a boy... I know of course what I am doing I am recreating my father in my dreams as I had done in my waking hours all those years ago as a boy. Inventing him. Knowing nothing about him then, except that he has married his brother's widow who became my mother; the possibilities had been innumerable and my



adolescent mind had drawn various selves out of the protean being of the father I had imagined. (AMT, 42)

A psychoanalytical analysis of this dream shows that there is a congenital gap between Gopal as the “real being” and Gopal as a boy. Gopal’s father had died when he was hardly eight, his memory of his relationship with his father was just a blank, yet his dreams are shadowed by the Ego Ideal of the superior being that is his father, this somehow leads to a disjunction in his subjectivity. If seen from a Lacanian point of view Gopal is governed by the law of *miconessance* or misrecognition through the ‘I’ figure in his dream further misguided by the multifarious images of his ego ideal, i.e. his father. Gopal being a Brahmin himself sees his father’s act of marrying his brother’s wife as act of incest under conventional codes and his existence as lying on the edifice of a sinful act. Thus when later in his life, he confronted with this truth related to his birth his very being disintegrated. But there is a peaceful part in his dream which always move towards reconciliation:

And now I dream of this kindly man, as if we have through years achieved a kind of peace in our relationship, as if like any son with a living father, we have finally after a long struggle, achieved a harmonious relationship. (AMT, 43)

Even this sense of harmony is problematic in terms of analyzing Gopal’s psyche because he could seek for peace only through alienation by being an escapist.

The invocation of Oedipus complex in Gopal’s subjectivity gains momentum when Deshpande brings him close to Hamlet’s melancholia. She uses the narrative convenience of introducing a sense of guilt. The intertextual reference of reading Hamlet generates a crisis for Gopal when he says:

It was when I read Hamlet fortunately much later, that the most terrible version of my parents' story entered my mind. In this story my father becomes a man succumbing to his passion for his brother's wife, the woman compliant, a pregnancy and a child to come and then, after the husband's convenient death (no I could not make my father poison his brother) a marriage of convenience... my father was never a father to me \_\_\_\_\_ not after I knew his story he was my mother's guilty partner... my mother's husband. (AMT, 43)

But Gopal's world and times are far different from that of Hamlet, his situation doesn't hang between the two horns of a dilemma of "to be or not to be" but rather of a straight forward escapist action of shunning away from responsibility under the garb of a philosophical quest. This narrative convenience of introducing a Hamlet like Oedipus complex becomes problematic when we take into consideration Deshpande's second epigraph preceding the second part of her novel with the quotation from Brahad-aranakya Upanishad:

Whatever wrong has been done by him,  
His son frees him from it all;  
Therefore he is called a son. By his son a father stands firm in  
this world

From the point of view of the above statement, Gopal can be seen as the dutiful son who denounces worldliness of a householder to carry out penance for the wrongs done by his father. This allegorical mode of presenting Gopal as truth seeker and scapegoat simultaneously comes in confrontation with the obvious suggestions of Oedipus complex made in the narrative. Is Deshpande trying to suggest a kind of comparison of Indian philosophy pertaining to filial relationships with the radical theories of psychoanalysis of the West? The fusion of both the Indian and western ideologies in the characterization of Gopal seems contradictory to each other leading to further complications with the male 'I' targeted by Shashi Deshpande. But if seen from a feminist angle of interpreting, both these ideologies are firmly rooted to patriarchal

norms. His father's marriage to his brother's widow **could** have been seen as a matter of individual choice, rather than an act of incest. Gopal **himself** seems to patronize the same individual choice of discarding his family but **judges** his father strictly from the conventional codes of marriage and sexuality **within the ambit** of patriarchy. Tradition allows men to be irresponsible of their family in turning **ascetic**, so he becomes a pseudo ascetic in the times of acquisition, leaving his **family** financially insecure. Shashi Deshpande attempts to depict a collapse of both **western** and Indian trend in Gopal leading to a disintegration of his personality. In this **manner** she shows how patriarchal conventions are the breeding ground of impending **tension** in Gopal's life.

To get a deeper insight into Deshpande's **delineation** of her central male subject one has to analyze him in terms of his relationships **with his** better half Sumi. Though their relationship started with love, the Camus- like **need** for individual separateness was there in Gopal from the beginning of his marital life. **The potential** to walk out on his family was always there in Gopal. Once he had argued **about** the meaning of the word *sahriday* with Sumi:

There is no word in English that can fit **the** concept. English is a practical language; it has no words for the **impossible**. *sahriday* in the sense of oneness is a impossible concept ... its **two hearts** beating. They can never beat in such unison that there's only one **sound** (AMT, p. 24).

The concept of union in love held a peculiar **notion** in Gopal's life. There was no marital conflict between himself and Sumi, nor was **there any** other woman in his life. Yet during the later years of his stay with Sumi as **man and wife** his body showed signs of detachment. He could lie 'beside Sumi night after **night** quiescent feeling **nothing**.' There is no concrete reason behind this averseness for **physical** love in Gopal; rather it seems to be more deliberate than being natural. Because **even** after breaking out of his conjugality his body still bore the tinges of desire when Sumi came to meet him in his solitary confinement. In fact it is the alienation in his **psychic** realm which **debarred** him from coming closer to his wife, although his body felt the **requirement** all the same:

Gopal comes out of his thoughts, he becomes aware that the space between them in the room is filled with desire, that his body after all these many months, is awake. Why now, why here? He is angry with himself his very struggle against it making it difficult for him to subdue his body. He gives up and begins listening to Sumi and slowly desire ebbs away from him. (AMT, 223)

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The sense of detachment was there in Gopal in the very first day of his making love with Sumi because he felt that in union one completely merges with the other and thereby loses individual freedom:

I joined you in the river, you swam half way to meet me...with the sound of the river in our ears still that we came together for the first time. And I knew that it was for this, this losing yourself in another human being, that men give up their dreams of freedom. (AMT, 222)

Gopal is not incapable of love, neither is he wholly insensitive to Sumi's feeling. He knows that there is a vast difference in their ideas of individuality because of the social restrictions imposed by gender biases, he himself being a victim of the same. Thus he says:

And women too? Did u have your dreams of freedom as well? I never asked you, your body blocked out every thing about you for me. (AMT,p.223.)

Gopal could not get a glimpse of Sumi's inner self, so he blamed her body for creating a barrier to her mind. But did he ever make any real effort to know her? Gopal's act of walking out of his marriage gains a reticent acceptance from Sumi. She knew him thoroughly and had gradually sensed his manner of withdrawal:

I knew exactly when it happened. And I knew I could not stop you. I could do nothing. When you left I knew I would not question you, I would just let you go. (AMT, 221)

We can mark a kind of masochism in Gopal's subjectivity on account of his unpredictable sexual behavior. The masochistic moment as most critics would argue is in a sense subversive of conventional or normal formations of subjectivity. Leo Barsani in The Freudian Body sees masochism as a formation that disturbs the fixities of literary and visual language to produce a designifying moment or a denarrativizing moment. Here the omniscient narrator in Shashi Deshpande also comes within such a denarrativizing moment when she offers her male subject the chance to indulge in his concomitant "unquiet pleasure" of masochism through the male "I". Kaja Silverman in her notable work Male Subjectivity at the margins proposes masochism as a formation of suspension, through her preferred notion of "deferral" — masochism as a deferral of male submission beneath the Law of the Father and of the normative pressure of male sexuality. For her this is indeed a large part of the definition of perverse sexuality that is to be set against the aim directed normality of the male subject. The fully consummated pleasure of the male subject is associated with guilt, but the suspended showy pleasure of the masochistic fantasy is disavowal of the paternal function, a sort of escape from it, and a way of punishing its imposition: "What is beaten in masochism is not so much the male subject as the father or the father in the male subject." Gopal's subjectivity too is close to a similar crisis: firstly by a deferred submission to his father's guilt of incest, secondly by acquiring a sadistic attitude towards sexuality (though not a perversion) and finally by escaping from his paternal function by shunning the responsibilities of fatherhood.

The fusion of western and Indian trends which Deshpande incorporates in delineating Gopal's character is also visible in Sumi. Unlike a typical sentimental Indian wife, she does not indulge in melancholic melodrama. Sumi is not broken down nor does she view Gopal's action as a sense of betrayal, rather she is pushed towards a need to recognize herself taking over the responsibilities discarded by Gopal. In fact it is her

husband's escaping from being the patriarchal model of an epitome of protection and financial security that leads her towards life's challenges. Sumi who has always given Gopal his freedom makes space for his shortcomings without blaming him and tentatively works towards restructuring her world. Yet in spite of any fault of her own she had to bear scornful remarks, especially from the part of her daughters for which she suffered a helpless sense of alienation:

The three of them ranged against me. Am I the enemy? Do my daughters blame me for what Gopal has done... Why can't I talk to them, tell them what I feel, how it was? (AMT, 23)

The disintegration in the family caused an adverse effect on the daughters; the eldest daughter Aru even blamed Sumi of indifference in her reaction to the whole thing. But Sumi was undaunted in her matter of fact attitude of accepting Gopal's moving out of their lives. When her second daughter Charu asked her if she can accept their father if he returns, she replied thus:

High and mighty? No I can never be that. But taking him back that sounds odd to me. As if he is a pet dog who strayed away or something ... I'm not a good hater. I can never keep it up for long. But even if he comes back things can never be the way they were... (AMT, 194)

Deshpande has included a radical angle to the plot through Gopal's daughter Arundhati alias Aru. Aru with a rebellious spirit within her could not reconcile to Sumi's manner of reticence to Gopal's shunning away from responsibility. She needed justice for the harmful effects on their lives both financially or emotionally, thus she didn't hesitate to tread the "dusty lanes of law" against her father. Deshpande posits Aru as Gopal's adversary, and the dialogue between Aru and Gopal during his self proclaimed exile is significant to the plot. For Gopal all the queries of Aru about his present action seemed like 'yaksha's' questions. And Gopal had no choice but to confess about his fears:

I was frightened Aru, frightened **of the emptiness within me, I was afraid** of what I could do to us, to all of **you with the emptiness inside me. That is** the real reason why I walked **from** Sumi, from you and your sisters. (AMT, 50)

Aru was not someone who would yield to such **pleas**. She demanded that Sumi **should** file for a divorce to penalize Gopal for **maintenance**. Whereas Sumi's opinions **differed** from her daughter:

Gopal has outsmarted the law. He **has** given us all he had. He has **nothing** now not even a proper job. I don't **think** he is getting more than a mere subsistence from Shanker's press \_\_\_ **so** Ramesh tells me .So what **can the** law make him do? (AMT, 61)

But Aru was determined; she revisits Gopal to **make** him realize his responsibilities. Retaining the mood of an adversary she blames **him of the disgrace and displacement** he has caused to their lives. Calling him a callous **father she** attacks him by her charge "Why did you get married at all, why did you have **children?"**(AMT, 62) Aru with the plans of suing her father for maintenance approaches Surekha, a lawyer with radical views. **More** important than the need for maintenance, Aru **wanted** to punish her father for his cowardice. Though Surekha knew that in the given circumstances when Gopal was apparently jobless, a case was not much feasible, **yet she** agreed to meet Gopal just to placate Aru. In her meeting with Gopal, Surekha **raises the** issue of the anti- brahmanical article which he had written. This very article had **resulted** in serious repercussions where Gopal's protesters armed themselves against him **with his** family history to **abuse him** as "bustard of a Brahmin". Owing to this incident Aru **had** once rebuked her father as a coward, which Gopal later confessed before Surekha to be a correct accusation by his daughter. Probably this was the chief reason behind his **quitting** from job and taking on a kind of alternative penance for his father's guilt. Therein lays Gopal's double-standards, because a person who holds anti-brahminical views in writing is not supposed to react so

vehemently to an abuse that drew him up to the point of leaving his job, family and move forward to a self-proclaimed exile. Further the dialogue between Surekha and Gopal brought up issues of feminism and Gopal's take on them. Putting forward an argument on the feminist rejection of patriarchy he remarked:

I don't understand how feminists can argue that a man is responsible for his family. If you reject patriarchy you must reject all those things based on patriarchy too. (AMT, 214)

Such a statement shows his self-defense against his actions. At this point mention may be made about the various feelings and ethical dimensions of "maleness" as discussed in the electronic conference called <gen.maleness> analysed in detail by George Yudice in his essay "what's a straight white men to do". The dialectic of oppression and responsibility within male subjectivity as discussed in this electronic dialogue is somewhat close to Gopal's position. Occupying the role of the victim by adopting the rhetoric of oppression in terms of overresponsibility is one way to rearticulate the social and political discourse. George says that it is responsibility, in the sense of assuming a relative privilege that is at stake. In Gopal's case his privilege of seeking isolation was hindered by his responsibilities, especially after Sumi's death. But Aru took back her charges against him and liberated him from his burden of fatherhood, thereby further disempowering him from the masculine ideal of providing maintenance. To keep his ethical position clear he logically tries to escape responsibility by talking about the symbolic importance given to motherhood over fatherhood. He asks "what is fatherhood against this weight this certainty of motherhood?" Again in an earlier occasion while musing on the issues of body and motherhood Gopal had come up with the following proposition:

The life of the body \_\_\_\_ yes I reveled in it... I saw it when Sumi put the baby to her breast. For I knew when I looked at them, they belong together as I never did ... they were together in that magic circle...woman and child. And I was outside. A man is always an outsider...for a woman from



the moment she is pregnant **there** is an overriding reason for living, a justification for life that is that **is loudly and emphatically true. A man has to search for it always and forever. (AMT, 68)**

Gopal is trying to hint that the bondage of **motherhood** is the sole self realization for a woman, while a man has to move out of **the state** of being a householder. Here Deshpande is not valorizing motherhood as **opposed to fatherhood** through the male “I” in Gopal. Rather she is posing a more serious **question**, does traditional philosophy allows women space for quest of self realization **beyond** the confinements of household? She is always posited as an “insider”, it is the man **who** moves outside.

Though Deshpande apparently embarks with **an androgynous** vision of **philosophizing** on humanity through the male “I” in Gopal, it is **in the rebellious daughter Aru that the androgynous task eventually culminates. Aru after her mother Sumi’s death decides to take up the responsibilities of the family on her shoulders. She promises her grandmother Kalyani to become “the man in the family”. It is she who finally aids Gopal to carry on his exile as an escape from encountering pain when she says:**

Yes Papa you go. We’ll be all **right we’ll be quite all right don’t worry** about us. (AMT, 246)

Deshpande deals with the complications of **male subjectivity** in A Matter of Time through another minor but important character Sripathi. **Sripathi**, Sumi’s father who lived in the “Big House” exerted an unquestioning authority **over his granddaughters. Sripathi a marginalized character in the plot has hardly any narrative stance of his own, yet his silence is enough to dominate the lives of his wife Kalyani and daughters Sumi, and Premi. The reason behind this oppressive silence was the disappearance of his four year old mentally retarded son, youngest of all the siblings, from a railway station. He accused Kalyani for the missing of his son and stopped conversation with her which continued for 30 years till he and Sumi died in an accident. The obsession for a son which is rooted in the Indian tradition is**

something which Deshpande debunks through the character of Sripathi. His unquenched desire for his lost son finds reflection in his attitude towards his grandson i.e. Premi's son Nikhil. Sumi even feared that he might leave all his property in Nikhil's name leaving nothing for her daughters. But Sumi's presumptions were not correct because after Gopal's moving out of their lives Sripathi was benevolent to Sumi and her daughters though she didn't take his money. The peculiarity in Sripathi's nature was also to a great extent influenced by his partly incestuous marriage with his niece. Sripathi's marriage to Kalyani was a kind of deal which his sister Manorama initiated to keep the family property intact because Kalyani was her only child. The fact that Manorama was sonless was the chief reason in forcing her younger brother and only daughter into an awkward conjugality. And it was only at the request of Manorama after the incident of the missing son that Sripathi agreed to stay under the same roof with Kalyani in her paternal home, despite of the fact that he treated his wife as a complete stranger. The deep sense of alienation in Sripathi is analyzed by Sumi when she says:

My father gave up everything and turned to solitude. Sometimes I think he turned his back upon his wife because he was frightened of himself, of what he could do in his anger. I have sensed it him a kind of suppressed savagery. Or may be it was only an excuse which helped him to get out of a marriage he never wanted...he seems to me a victim as much as Kalyani(AMT,168).

Sripathi could escape from the grief of losing his son by maintaining his oppressive reticence over the topic. The moment in which he tried to break his alienation by speaking up to Sumi is not sustained in the plot. It is at this very moment while Sumi took her father for a ride, the issue evolved, but before it could take any turn the scooter met with an accident and both of them died. Thus without resolving the complications in Sripathi's subjectivity Deshpande adopts the narrative convenience of safely dismissing him from the plot.

Another marginalized male subject in **the plot** is Gopal's nephew Ramesh who enacts the role of a protective male prescribed by **patriarchy** in helping Sumi to adjust with the situation. A similar protective attitude is **seen** in the teenager Hrishi who used to pick and drop Sumi's second daughter Charu from **her** classes. But Hrishi shared Gopal's sense of isolation and the feeling of being singled out as male in the company of Sumi and her daughters when he said "too many females **here**. Its like a zenana."(60)

The escapist vision in male psyche is **the crux** of Deshpande's delineation of male subjectivity in A Matter of Time. Her construction of Gopal's subjectivity gets complicated when on one hand the omniscient narrator incorporates in him the belief in the human will by the philosophy of Natyashashtra:

...the plot of human kind evolves **through** our lives, it is the human will that keeps things in motion... "the **beginning** lies in desire" \_\_\_\_\_ what the Natyashastra says about the plot of **drama** is for him true about the drama of human life as well.( AMT, 93)

On the other hand she inculcates in his escapist vision **the philosophical negativism** of Western existentialism:

Camus is right. We carry our places of **exile** within us. It entered into me too, the day I learnt the truth about my **parents** (AMT, 217).

Gopal till the end of the novel continues his exile, or rather his personal pursuit of abdicating responsibility, even Sumi's death could not **bring** him back to his paternal role.

By burdening the male "I" with the androgynous process of philosophizing on humanity Deshpande in fact subtly critiques the whole male dominated philosophical

traditions. There is no monolithic traditional ground where the feminine will in quest of self or immortality can be located. There is hardly any female philosopher because the restriction on female subjectivity doesn't provide the scope and luxury for philosophizing. Sumi being an insider could be freed from her familial bonds only through death. But Gopal could walk out of his responsibilities because he has the choice and decision as a male subject. Similar is the case with Sripathi. Shashi Deshpande by questioning the stereotypical male ideal of being a caretaker shows that even a deliberate male choice of breaking that ideal can cause adverse affect more on the dependent females than on the man himself. Thus even a choice of subversion by alienation in a male subject in Deshpande's world reinforces the male dominance in the familial power structure.

## **ii) The Male "I" and the Rhetoric of Body in Moving On**

In her latest novel Shashi Deshpande uses the technique of a diary in giving a narratorial stance to her chief male subject. There are seven chapters entitled "Baba's Diary" where the formation of the male "I" as the first person narrator becomes functional. It is interesting to note that the chapter divisions are not entitled on the actual identity of the male subject, i.e. Badri Narayan but a relational one 'Baba' in association with chief protagonist Manjari. The rhetoric of the human body forms the crux of the narrative content of the plot thereby posing a ground for the complications of the male "I" in the novel. In the chief male subject Baba, human body is the site for professional competency for he is a medical practitioner. As a doctor knowing the details of anatomy and physiology he valorized the various dimensions of the human body beyond its sexual connotations.

The first chapter of the male narrative sequence focuses on the childhood of the subject as seen by him from the fag end of his cancer ridden life. Finding no human ear to

bear in patience his pouring of heart he used the **diary** as a substitute. His own **loneliness** during illness brought to his mind the **relationship** he shared with his father. **While** his father made Badri his confidant in his last days, **he** himself having no son had **no other** option but to confide in the pages of his diary. **Sometimes** memory discloses **certain** unrealized facts through objective reflection. **Badri** now recreating the memory of his relation with his father could see a different **perspective** of his character by which **he was** untouched during his adolescence.

Now the things he said are coming **back** to me, they throng my mind and compel to see my father see my **father** differently. I thought him a **quiet**, sedate man; no let me be honest, I **thought** him rather dull. But **when** I recollect his words, when I connect **them** to other, almost forgotten aspects of him, I see a man who was **something** of a rebel (MO, 4).

Badri's father being a staunch Gandhian of his times married a Harijan girl as his **first** wife breaking the orthodox norms of his Brahman **family**. His first wife died issueless, and he remarried, the next time a Brahmin girl by **whom** he had two children, Badri and his elder sister Gayatri. But she too has an early **demise** creating a lack in Badri's life. Even the faint memory of his mother's being was **too fragmented** to construct a virtual image of her in his imagination.

As a child I was often an object of **pity** to women. Only sometimes at night when I was in bed or when I was **low**, a kind of memory came to me, a memory that had no substance. It **was** like a shadow of a shadow, a vague sense of having being cuddled in a **lap**, the feel of a rough texture of a fabric against my skin, a smell **which** I knew later was the smell of women. (MO, 9)

Though his sister Gayatri's presence in his life **compensated** much for the feeling of loss, yet she was more a companion than being a mother **figure**. I think in the delineation of

the subjectivity through 'Baba' Deshpande is making a clear Lacanian division of the "realm of the symbolic", and the "realm of the imaginary", leaving almost no significance for the Archaic mother. The symbolic realm in Lacan is attained after the mirror stage when the "I" acquires language and thereby enters the Law of the father, where the phallus is the privileged signifier which represses all the desires of going back to the mother. Feminists like Julia Kristeva debunk this Lacanian model by her idea of the semiotic stage. This is a stage before the acquiring of language and the division of gender when the child is still in its prelinguistic babblings. According to Kristeva the road to go back to the archaic mother is paved by this semiotic stage which the Lacanian model denies. The dead mother is a narrative convenience that Deshpande applies to most of her male subjects. The absent mother becomes a recurring trope right from the case of Naren in Roots and Shadows, Kishore in Binding Vine and finally Baba in Moving On who shared the commonality of losing their mother in the infant stage. This can be argued that Shashi Deshpande herself is within the phallogocentric trap of the Law of Father in delineating her male subjects.

The first chapter of the novel which is incidentally also the first chapter of the male narrative focuses on the childhood memories of Badri or Baba which he penned down during the last days of his fight with cancer. Memory forms a core in all of Deshpande's novels, but memory itself has a very fragile structure. A moment in past which is recreated through memory has a virtual ontology for it reproduces the now that was once lived. The male narrative in Moving On which is captured in the pages of a diary thus has a virtual element to it. Yet finely juxtaposed to these flashes of memory are the moments of now where the subject struggles with his body the "bleak house" of desire and pain to come to a deeper level of understanding of the inner self, within the kernel of the body. No doubt, the complications of the plot begin with the rhetoric of body but Deshpande's aim is directed towards a realm which transcends the body beyond all its division of gender to the androgynous territory of the search for wholeness.

Assuming the Law of the father as the governing principle for Deshpande's narrative, it is not surprising that the rhetoric of body which acts as a repetitive theme in this novel takes on a male gendered form. If one looks at the whole androgynous project

of Deshpande's narratives, specially taking into account the spiritual search for wholeness of being, the gendering of the human body as "Mr. Bones" seems ambivalent. Mr.bones in fact is the nickname given to the skeletal frame which Badri used as his teaching tool. The fervent admiration for the human body in Badri is defined by the chief protagonist Manjari or Jiji, as she is known better, in the following words:

He had absolute faith in the perfection of the human body. If fault lines showed up in the execution of the plan, that did not take away from the perfection of the plan itself. He sang praises, I remember of the symmetry of the body. A symmetry that was not just aesthetic but functional as well .he spoke of the efficiency of the organs, the super-efficient backup system. Look at the kidney and the liver, its like having a huge chemical factory, a scrupulously selective waste disposal system inside us, he said. And the magnificence of the communication system, the network of nerves, the exquisitely minute signals sent and picked up with such rapidity. 'A marvelous piece of finely tuned mechanism': these were his words. For him the beauty of the human body has nothing to do with the luscious curve of the female form...his ideal was the body of the athlete, the gymnast in action, the dancer when dancing, the swift, only just coordinated movements of the child's body when playing.( MO, 23)

The valorizing of the body by Baba was purely from an asexual dimension. Baba's love for the human frame has a philosophical dimension to it beyond the professional terms of being a "haddi doctor", as he was called. Though the body decomposes the bones remains and so he said:

I am a bone man. It's the right name for me. This remains when all is gone, this remains for centuries, for millenniums. It lasts, it survives, it carries our stories within it. (MO, 24)

Thus by suggesting the eternal nature of bones Badri tries to project a defiance of the body towards temporality and extinction. Though Mr. Bones is a gendered connotation to define the human form it is more applicable if we consider Badri's self proclaimed identity as a "bone man". The crux of the matter is that it is not only the soul or spirit which is immortal but the bones as well; mere death cannot completely destroy the human form. So he writes:

We are the true ephemera of this universe \_\_\_\_\_ this truth remains. I accept it and write it down here. My gesture against complete extinction. My fist raising gesture of defiance saying \_\_ I am. I will be. (MO, 16)

The rhetoric of body which starts with his teaching tools Mr. Bones enters into a complication in terms of sexuality and the enjoyment of physical desires. Everything in the body has a function necessary for life and sex was one of that, as Baba saw it strictly from his medical eyes. But his idea of the importance of the body and its passions was resisted by his wife Vasu:

It took Vasu a very long time to let her body enter into our relationship...our bodies met, they merged, our marriage was consummated,...she still had some defenses after that,...she was always the one in control, she played the tune to which our sexual dance was performed.

*No not now, not today; I'm tired; it's too early; its too late some other time, tomorrow ,don't...*

...the despair for me, the cold feeling of not being able to reach her of never being able to let her feel my love the way I wanted to... and yet the body independent so often of the mind, has its own logistics. (MO, p.109-110)



The corporeal and material desires of enjoyment in the male subjectivity of Badri though not shared by his partner didn't create a rift in their conjugal life. But disagreement cropped up when Vasu failed to understand Jiji's passion for Shyam:

As a father, I found it hard to be witness to the raw sexuality of my daughter's feelings for a man, something Jiji almost flaunted. But as a man I could understand her feeling too well (MO, 109).

It is chiefly their disjunction on the matter of desires of the body, that Badri and Vasu faced a communication gap on the topic of their daughter's marriage. The complexities in the father and daughter relationship are a recurrent feature in Deshpande's novels. The male subjectivity in Badri faces a dilemma in dealing with the sexuality of his daughter more because his wife made it difficult for him to confront Jiji:

...how bewildered I was by the change in her after she met Shyam; I found it hard to imagine that a girl so intent in her career, so devoted to her parents, could turn overnight into a passionate, rebellious woman. Hormones I told myself it's the hormones raging in her body. (MO, 203)

Thus in the dimensions of sexuality Badri could not fully come in terms with the dictates of the body. Firstly, because his own sexual life with Vasu was incompatible, and secondly he couldn't prohibit his young daughter from changing the course of her life being lured by her raw passions. Further this belief in the perfection of the functions of the human body slowly disintegrates in Badri as he watches his wife succumb to the killing disease gangrene, and also through the perception of his own impending death. The inevitability of death offered Badri a philosophical dimension about the body which he internalized through his knowledge of the Upanishads:

*Tat tvan asi svetakatu.* I observed this idea of the body being only the outer covering, within it the essence, the unseen formless essence from which the long infinite thread of life unwinds (MO, 112).

Badri throughout his professional life, with all his concentration in the human body, gave so less importance to the activities of the mind that he almost neglected Vasu's intellectual potential against his professional writings. This exhibits a male subject's ego about his own intellectual capabilities as a writer. He considered her writing as a mere pastime which he assumed was much inferior to the superiority of his professional skills which forms a part of the patriarchal mindset of the society. The dialectics of power within the family springs mainly from the neglect or non-acknowledgement of woman's intellectual preoccupations which reflects gender biasness. Deshpande's male subject Badri is no exception to this gender game when he confesses:

I took it for granted that the only writing table we had was for me to work at. I saw her clearing the dining table at night to work on and it seemed natural to me that she should work there rather than disturb me. I presumed that when I was writing I would be undisturbed, whereas I had, I remember now (with most uncomfortable feelings), no compunctions about disturbing her when she was writing. (MO, 197)

Here Deshpande through Badri is exposing the reaction towards the vocation of writing adopted by a woman in a male dominated society. The chief predicament of a woman writer is the acknowledgement of her intellectual authenticity behind her woman's skin. Deshpande herself falling prey to being marginalized as a women writer uses a male "I" in her narratives to prove her creative faculties beyond the expression of feminine concerns to the complications of masculinity. Badri in his dairy also mentions a so called accomplished author whose patronizing and condescending comment on Vasu's writing in a press conference hurt her ego so deeply that she completely secluded herself from the literary world. After a long period of literary muteness she retorted back with her story "Blackout". Body which she always ignored in her real as well as fictional world gained a stronger rhetoric in her last story "Blackout", a kind of compromising step towards imbibing her husband's knowledge of the body. In this story she vehemently criticizes the

cruelty of a Muslim man towards his wife. **Deshpande** makes the male “I” in **Badri** a mouthpiece to confess for the undue criticism offered to a woman writer by the male readers as well as writers:

Not only did she write just **fiction**, no, stories, she wrote of **women**, she wrote about love, marriage and **the home**. And if that wasn't trivial, **what** was it? So I thought. Now I **think** I should have respected what **Vasu** was doing. She belonged to a **profession** which deserved much more than the condescension I granted it. (**MO**, 201)

The only person who respected Vasu as a **writer** was Badri's brother in law **RK**. In fact it is in the influence of **RK** that **Badri** **tried** to enjoy the fictional world of **books**. **Badri** was fascinated with **Dickens' Bleak House** in the last stage of his cancer, following **Vasu's** death. This particular book gave him **immense** satisfaction chiefly because the anticipation of progressing with the story gave him a kind of confidence that he would be alive to finish the book. This novel made him **realize** how **Dickens'** parodied the ideal of marriage by parodying the biblical phrase “**bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, shadow of his shadow**” through the relationship of **Mr. and Mrs. Snagsby**. For **Badri** this biblical phrase seemed to be a mockery because it **falls flat** with the death of a **human being**. **Badri** related his sufferings as a “**brief loan of the body**” which he so much valorized, and the gradual movement of death as the culmination of the process of **repayment**.

The male “I” in **Badri** finally **realized** that to attain wholeness or **nirvana** through body is an impossible quest for **corporeal** beings, because the very idea of a complete self is defied in the inevitability of **death**. Significantly, the male narrative **ends** with the following words from **Badri** accepting **defenselessly** the failure of the body at the hands of death:

... from the moment the umbilical cord is cut, we begin our search for the part of ourselves that will complete us, we look for which that will make us whole. It never happens, I know that now. The search is always doomed

to failure....it makes no difference to me anyway. I am at the end of everything. There is nothing left. Only to let go. That's all I have to do now let go. Accept that its over. No more... (MO, 336)

Another major function that the rhetoric body functions in the narrative structure of the novel is the depiction of its perversions. The perverse will of the Body through Eros is depicted in the male subjectivity of Shyam, Jiji's husband. The voyeuristic eye of the male gaze is metaphorized in his very profession of being a cinematographer. According to Mulvey the psychoanalytic view of feminist film theory, a woman is seen as only the support for a masculine subject's projection and identification, the object of male gaze (Mulvey 1989). Furthering the debate on feminist film theory de Lauretis offers a critique of Mulvey's description of the cinematic apparatus:

Cinematic codes create a gaze, a world, and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of desire. It is an amazingly concise and precise description of cinema, not only as a social technology....but also a signifying practice, a work of semiosis which engages desire and positions the subject in the very process of vision, looking and seeing. (de Lauretis 1984:59).

For de Lauretis, then in absolute contradiction to Mulvey, narrativity and scopophilia, visual pleasure, are the essential ingredients of cinema, the measure of desire for men and women. Shyam as a male viewer takes scopophilic pleasure in the female form of Mandira displayed for enjoyment through his camera lens and falls in love with her. Besides his controlling and curious gaze as a photographer, there was a kind of sensuousness about Shyam's demeanor which aroused in Mandira such a tremendous passion that she risked all her future prospects in getting married to him. Like Badri, Shyam too was true to his profession having an obsession for images and perspectives with a conviction that a picture tells a story better than reality itself. For him his camera was the 'eye plus the brain'. His camera was for him the third eye which showed him the

truth. Infact his love for Jiji was also mediated by a photographic vision, his very first sight of her was through the lens of a camera when he visited their home to click Vasu's pictures:

I saw it when I developed the picture. Your innocence. I fell in love with you at that moment (MO, 186).

In the short term of their marital life it was Shyam's body which Jiji could come in terms with rather than his real being. Jiji internalized the sensuousness of her photographer husband by investing her feminine gaze over his male body:

It was Shyam who showed me the beauty of the male body. He took my hands, hesitant and unsure at first, on an exploratory tour of his body, tracing tantalizing paths, showing me the terrain that soon became more familiar to me than my own. (MO, 187-188)

But the perversion of the voyeuristic gaze turned down all his ideas of instinctive truth, when he had fallen prey to his libidinal instincts by raping Malu, his teenaged sister-in-law. Malu's death after her pregnancy and Jiji's desertion made him realize his heinous crime of rape though he never confessed about it. Further it is the guilt of this perversion of the body through Eros which finally led him to commit suicide a similar situation of paranoiac alienation and death as faced by Naren in Roots and Shadows.

A kind of coldness was always there in Shyam, especially in terms of his objectivity towards his filial relationships. The same kind of coldness was seen in him in view of his attitude towards Jiji's career. Leaving her medical studies in the midst Jiji joined a general degree course for compensation, but in the guise of protectiveness Shyam intervened again:

You'll have to give up college. You can't travel all that way everyday... I won't be there all the time. (MO, 254)

Jiji blind in her passion never saw the perversity deep seated in Shyam's Gaze. Shyam always hoping to work for big banner movies never achieved success in financial terms. Being incapable of providing Jiji and her new born son the basic amenities of life, he turned back the blame on Jiji:

You have changed. I never knew you were so money minded, I never thought you were such a bourgeois. You were not like this. (MO, 290)

Strands of alienation can be marked in Shyam in his persistent demands to be alone when caught in domestic rifts with Jiji. Once he even left her alone at night when their baby was seriously ill. Escapism a common feature in Deshpande's male subjects undoubtedly forms an integral part in Shyam's psyche. Thus when things went awry in both his personal as well as professional life he welcomed suicide as the safest option to escape responsibility.

Like her father Manjari too had a deep conviction in the revels of the body. Being widowed at the age of twenty one, she hungered for male contact for years. Finally she found her object in Raman a temporary tenant in her house. Here Deshpande objectifies male subjectivity through Raman whose masculinity was used by Manjari to pacify her desires. A reversal of the sexual powers is depicted through this objectification of a male subject as Manjari was the one in command:

He can never come into my house, it is I who will go to him. He can never approach me, he can never ask me any questions. He has to wait for me to go to him, the decision will be mine, mine alone. He has to accept this (MO, 258).

There was no emotion in the whole process, Manjari related to Raman through what she called "a process of osmosis". All the rules for their affair were set by Manjari and he obeyed all her injunctions faithfully. Manjari allowed no words to be exchanged between them, thus Raman couldn't find words beyond his consistent refrain "Ma'am, Ma'am, ma'am..." In this process there is no voice for Raman as Manjari didn't allow him to

exercise his will except demanding his **body to perform** to its perfection. **There was a** mystery behind Raman's actual identity. **The policeman suspected Raman's stay in** Manjari's house and the threats that she **was receiving** from some underworld group owing to a property matter as interlinked. **When** Manjari demanded him to **leave** he begged her thus:

Ma'am, please don't send me **away** from you. I promise I won't **trouble** you, I don't expect anything **from** you. Just let me stay here, **don't send** me away. I don't want anything **only** to see you, only to look at **you...**  
(MO, 277)

The exploitation of Raman's sexuality by **Manjari** and his subsequent desertion **marks** Deshpande's deliberate reversal of the power **relation** between the sexes as **subtle attack** on the patriarchal society.

The remnant of the "protecting **male**", imposed by patriarchy is **visible in** Raja, a family friend of Manjari. Deshpande **incorporates** in Raja all the ingredients of a responsible Indian man. He was the one who **brought** Manjari back to her family **at the** time of Vasu's illness. Further his unflinching **help** during Badri's fight with **cancer** compensated for the latter's lack of a son. **Deshpande** plays with the theme of **colonial** burden in male subjectivity through the character of BK, Raja's father, who had an obsession with everything that is English, from **music** to literature. Raja right from his childhood was more close to his childless aunt Gayatri and her brother Badri **than his** own parents. As Badri remarks:

Raja takes his responsibilities **seriously**. It seems odd **when I think** of it that BK's son has become my **mainstay** and prop while BK himself is left with a retarded daughter. (MO, 52)

Even for his aunt Gayatri he acted as a surrogate **son** fulfilling her dreams of building a house for their joint family. But with Manjari his **gender** bias became obvious in many instances, e.g. his reluctance in agreeing to her drinking habits for she was a woman, his

distrust in women drivers, and of course the fact that she lived alone. On one occasion when Manjari had some unknown visitors, Raja maintaining his protective air told her:

Forget your feminism for a moment and face facts, Jiji. It helps to let people know you are not alone. (MO, 219)

Raja was much conservative in his beliefs. Like “the archetypal Brahmin” expecting his son to become a lawyer, a doctor, an accountant’ or any of the intellectual professions he strenuously denied his sons ambitions of becoming a tennis player. Sharing the tragedy of losing a spouse like Manjari he proposed her for marriage hoping to make the family circle complete for their children. But Manjari refused to surrender her independence to the bondage of marriage. The anger of a rejected male in Raja spewed out when he came to know about Manjari’s transgression with Raman. Though Raja doesn’t have a narrative stance of his own he is present throughout the plot as Manjari’s best companion always ready to protect her with his zeal of being a responsible man. Raman is safely dismissed from the plot, which helps Raja to come to reconciliation with Manjari. In fact Deshpande uses a narrative convenience of an accident which Raja encounters making it obligatory for Manjari to take care of him and thereby a chance for clearing misunderstandings. Deshpande hints at the possibilities of a marriage between the two but like most of her novels the plot closes with an open ending.

In Indian aesthetics “Atma” or “soul” is genderless and it is the body which holds the “Atma” during the existential span. Thus if one applies syllogism, body must also be genderless. Deshpande’s gendering the body as ‘Mr. Bones’ in a plot which lays emphasis on the existential philosophy of “being and death”, seems to compliment the masculine order of the metaphysical tradition, something which she subverts in A Matter of Time. On one hand she projects the perversions of male sexuality in Shyam, while on the other hand there is Mandira’s feminine *jouissance*, her unquenching sexuality owing to which she objectifies Raman. This showcases the fact that the desires of body knows no discrimination of gender, something which both Badri and his daughter Mandira



acknowledge. Contradictions being a part of Shashi Deshpande's narratives, all her leveling procedures against discrimination through a male narrator fall flat when the very being or the Body is gendered as Mr.Bones. Though her characters 'move on' from the enjoyment of the tantalizations of the body to the realization that completeness of self is unattainable, Deshpande herself cannot move out of the phallogentric route of the Law of The Father, because she challenges the discourse as well as is imprisoned within it. Thus if Mr.Bones suggest the self for her male narrator, the gendering as 'Mr' signifies "othering" from the writer's feminist point of view.

Narrativity, in its process and its meaning which effects on subjectivity, works simultaneously at many levels. The codes of narrative, the complexities of the technologies and contexts in which narrative is produced involve a multiplicity of speaking positions and modes of address, many of them related to the connections between narrative and genres, narrative and know ledges etc. narrative shifts from first person to third person opens ample scope for diversified interpretations and polemic viewpoints. Deshpande analyses masculinity within an Indian context as both her male characters quote heavily from the Upanishads but their subjective study is incomplete without taking recourse to the western trends of existentialism and psychoanalysis. On one hand Gopal internalizes the existential negativism of self exile and alienation, while Badri is highly influenced by Spinoza's concept of body within mind and the Heideggarian concept of "being and death". In terms of their sexual behavior and relationship with parents, psychoanalytic study is unavoidable.

Narrativization through male "I" in Shashi Deshpande's A Matter of time and Moving On no doubt follows a multiplicity of speaking positions, but both share the common ground of psychoanalytical thought. Nostalgia pervades Deshpande's rhetoric and forms an integral component of the subjectivities of the central male protagonists. Both the chief male subjects, Gopal and Badri to whom the narrative voice is endowed suffer from the commonality of a nostalgic association with their absent mother. While Deshpande herself feels "unmothered" in the literary tradition of which she forms a part

because she hardly associates herself with her contemporary Indian English Women writes. New psychoanalysts like Melanie Klein, Bela Grunberger etc argue in favor of a theory of feminine narcissism where the female narcissist creates the image of a male who is lacking and what he lacks is the mother bond and mother identification -----the experience of sameness with the mother that the girl has and loves. In terms of Deshpande's narrative technology of keeping the mother absent from the male subject, she seems to follow the theory of feminine narcissism in delineating the subjectivities of her male characters, despite her vehement claims against being a feminist rhetor.



## Chapter 4

### Conclusion

In this dissertation I have tried to search for a ground where a woman writer such as Shashi Deshpande can compete to be included in the dominant culture of publishing as a mainstream writer irrespective of her gender. Shashi Deshpande with a writing career of around thirty years in the Indian Literary scenario still seeks for a gender neutral space of the writing process. Resisting vehemently the categorical separation between writers and “woman writers” she prefers to be called as a “writer who happens to be woman” as it seems eminently suitable to include both masculine and feminine discourses within her narrative. In doing so she applies narrative designs to cater to a wider reading public beyond the boundaries of caste and gender to attain acclamation as an authentic writer. I have discussed the incorporation of the male “I” by Shashi Deshpande as one such narrative strategy which she herself agrees to in her essay “The Dilemma of a woman writer”. The male “I” within the plot which is relatively marginal in terms of subjective focus, subverts the mode of construction of the dominant discourses of male subjectivity. Patricia Waugh in her book Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern while talking about marginalization and subjectivity writes:

Subjectivity, historically constructed and expressed through the phenomenological equation self/other, necessarily rests masculine ‘selfhood’ upon feminine ‘otherness’. The subjective centre of socially dominant discourses... has been a universal subject, which has established its identity through the invisible marginalization or exclusion of what it has also defined as femininity. (Waugh, 1989: 22)

Deshpande inverts this equation of otherness in her novels by marginalizing her male subjects in terms of narrativity, while keeping the female selfhood in the centre. But more

then the strategic incorporation of the **male** “I” what is more interesting is **Deshpande’s** delineation of her male subjects through **the perspectives** mostly offered in a **descriptive** or analytic basis from her central female **protagonists**. By putting too much **emphasis** on the individualist approach of her central **female** protagonists **Deshpande’s narrative** falls within the risk of what one might call **the “representational fallacy”** of going back to bourgeoisie realism where literature is **viewed** as a reflection of individual **experience**. But it is more fulfilling to analyze the **same as** the marker of her narrative **consciousness**. Rejection of personal testimony which **seems** to valorize the power and **testimony** of individual psyche is considered as **limiting only**, if the critical approach is a sexist one where dichotomies such as male intellect/ **female** intuition, head/body and so on still take an upper hand. Linda S. Kaufman in her **essay** “That Long Goodbye” analyzing the trend of rejecting personal testimony quotes **Teressa De Lauretes’** observation:

What we call experience **should be** defined as a process shaped **coequally** by the relation of the inside **and** outside. Experience has a **mobile relation** to the reality it encounters, **the subjectivity** it assumes, and the **discursive** practices within which it **unfolds**. Subjectivity is constructed from experience but what one **comprehends** as subjective are in fact **material**, economic and interpersonal **social** and historical relations. (De Lauretis, 1984: ix)

Personal testimony forms the crux of **Deshpande’s** novels, which colors them with a sentimental hue offering a realistic taste to **the reader**. For **Deshpande** writing is a kind of self-revelation by which one retells ones **own** tales. Amrita Bhalla rightly remarks that “the process of confronting oneself and then ‘telling’ or writing is seen by **Deshpande** as a catharsis and a release.”(Bhalla, 34) It is self introspection that led to her narrative consciousness of being a feminist **as** she herself elaborates in an interview with Romita Chowdhary:

It was with the articulation of all **that had** been in me through the years that I came to feminism, to the **consciousness** of myself as a feminist. I read a great deal after this—Simone de Beavouir, Germaine Greer, Betty Friedan, Kate Millet, Virginia Woolf.... But it was not these

books that made me a feminist; they were only confirmatory. My idea of feminism came to me out of my own life, my own experiences and thinking. (Chowdhary, R. 34)

I have tried to interpret Deshpande's oeuvre from various critical perspectives in the introductory chapter while in the following two chapters I made a detailed study of her seven novels in analyzing her manner of constructing the male 'other'. In this analysis I have derived that there are some common patterns which recur in each of her novels in terms of construction of her male characters. In none of her novels do we find a male character in which one can locate the qualities of a true hero or a revolutionary masculinity. Shashi Deshpande doesn't represent her male characters as black and white; there is neither any hero nor any villain except the rapist in Binding Vine. All of them are average men who act as instruments within a whole cultural setup of patriarchal ideals. There is no aversion for men in Shashi Deshpande's world, if she is critical about them in terms of representation; it is only to expose the fissures of a traditionally inherited patriarchal mindset. In fact liberalism and progressiveness with respect to gender roles is a characteristic element in many of her important male characters. But the twist in the tale results from the fact that there are hindrances to such liberalism owing to the consensus generating apparatus of the patriarchal social structure. Deshpande's men have no solution to these hindrances, nor are they strong enough to exemplify a cultural revolution, thus they push themselves back to a safe escapist route.

Deshpande's men are apparently passive characters; there is nothing much unique about them in their moods of alienation when they tend towards escapist motives in finding solution to their struggles. The characteristic feature of most of the male characters in Deshpande is a kind of passivity, which transgresses from the ancient norms of *Purushartha* as depicted in Vidyapati's text Purusa Purushartha, which Hetukar Jha studies in translation and adjudicates as the perfect model for understanding Indian masculinity. This discourse prescribes the attributes of a manly man or *Purusha* as courage or valor (*saurya*), sense of discrimination (*viveka*), boldness of will or perseverance (*utsaha*), acute wit (*pratibha*), exact memory (*medha*) and learning (*vidya*).

Out of these attributes its Bravery and *Viveka* **guided** by *dharma*, *artha*, and *Kama* which are considered as most crucial in eventually **leading** a man to attain *Purushartha* or manhood. Although there is sense of discrimination or *viveka* in Deshpande's men none of them can be marked with exemplary valor or *saurya*. Rather the unmanly attributes prescribed by the text such as timidity or *kayarta* **can be** marked in the escapist policies adopted by her men e.g. the suicides of Naren and **Shyam**, social alienation as escape route adopted by Mohan and Gopal at the time of **professional** jeopardy and so on.

Declan Kiberd in "The Male Response to **Feminism**" says that "A true feminism would not assert woman's independence on man **but would** firmly remind men of their dependence on women" (225). Deshpande's **marginal** male subjects exhibit similar dependence on their female counterparts. Lack of **authority** is a common predicament suffered by most of Deshpande's male subjects as **seen** in case of Kaka in Roots and Shadows, Saru's father in The Dark Holds No Terrors and to some extent Badri in Moving On. All these men are emotionally controlled **by** their better halves, in case of Kaka it is his elder sister Akka whereas with the **other two** it is their wives who highly influence their decisions.

The dialectic of oppression and responsibility within male subjectivity is something which finds an intricate representation in **Deshpande's** male characters. The patriarchal ideal of being a protective male is at times **seen** as oppressive on the part of the man involved. In The Dark Holds No Terrors, Madhav **sees** his responsibility of being the eldest son in the family as oppressive to his own **career** goals. Likewise in That Long Silence Dada being saturated with playing the role of a **responsible** son finally migrates to Chicago as a means of escaping the family responsibilities. While in the same novel Mohan is haunted by the sense of irresponsibility when **he** faces a professional crisis. Again in Binding Vine the burden of responsibility as a **dutibound** son leads Amrut to take up civil services as his aim against his own dream of **going** abroad. Occupying the role of the victim by adopting the rhetoric of oppression in **terms** of over responsibility is one way to rearticulate the social and political discourse. A similar situation is faced by

Gopal in A Matter of Time when he tries to escape from all the responsibilities of being a father and a householder vested upon a male subject by patriarchy.

It is interesting to note that most of her male subjects who reject patriarchal norms to attain a more liberal attitude to gender roles, lack a mother, where mothers in Deshpande's plots are generally seen as inculcating the conservative principles in a child. In Deshpande motherhood upholds the ideals of conservatism and restraint as her mother figures fully cooperate in the ideological mechanism of patriarchy. The absent mother becomes a recurring trope right from the case of Naren in Roots and Shadows, Kishore in Binding Vine and finally Baba in Moving On who shared the commonality of losing their mother in the infant stage. It can be argued that Shashi Deshpande herself is within the phallogocentric trap of the Law of Father in delineating her male subjects. The motif of water as a sign of death is a consistent imagery in Deshpande. Water also represents the womb, perhaps by submerging in the water body the lost connection with the archaic mother's body is metaphorically recreated where union is only possible at the level of death.

In her delineation of male characters the father figures find an exclusively sensitive representation. An autobiographical element can be marked in the representation of her father figures as she herself as a writer is highly influenced by her own father Adya Rangacharya who was a preeminent Kannada writer. In all the seven novels that I have taken for analysis the fathers are depicted in a much liberal light in comparison to the husbands of Deshpande's heroines. The father figures transcend simple description to find an epistemological resonance. For example in delineating the character of Badri or Baba in Moving On Deshpande borrows much Indian Philosophical observations mostly from the Upanishads to analyze the existential condition of a human being by making Baba her mouthpiece through the device of a diary. The male narrative in the diary is further complemented by non other but Badri's daughter Mandira who is the first person narrator of the rest of the plot.

The complexities in the father and daughter relationships feature as exciting case studies in Deshpande's novels. In the manner of perceiving the fathers there are variations. Her father is a figure of emotional repose for Saru in The Dark holds no



terrors, while for Jaya in That Long Silence he is a paragon of idealization. In A Matter of Time Arundhati plays the role of an adversary to her father, whereas in Small Remedies a sort of Electra complex is marked in Madhu in terms of her relationship with her father. In Moving On both father and daughter share the commonality of valorizing and following the dictates of the body. The male subjectivity in Badri in Moving On faces a dilemma in dealing with the raw sexuality of his daughter Mandira in love with Shyam more because his wife failed to understand the situation.

There is also estrangement in father-daughter relationship as exhibited in Indu's relation to her father in Roots and Shadows, and Vana's relation to her father in BindingVine. The reason behind this is the fascination for a son over a daughter as embedded in the Indian psyche. In Indu's case Naren and later her husband Jayant acted out the role of a surrogate son for her father, with whom he attained an ease which he could never obtain with his own daughter. While in Vana's case she was simply non-existent for her father, it was her brother Kishore who mattered of all. Similar discontent though never overtly expressed is marked even in Gopal's case in A Matter of Time when he felt as being trapped in a *zenana* with a house full of his three daughters. In the same novel a similar constriction in the relation between Sripathi and his daughters can be marked. And the reason behind the rift again is the cause of a lost son who was accidentally left out in a railway platform by his wife Kalyani.

Deshpande very appropriately exhibits a male subject's ego about his own intellectual superiority which forms a part of the patriarchal mindset of the society. The dialectic of power within a family, which forms a part of the gender bias, springs mainly from the neglect or non-acknowledgement of a woman's intellectual and aesthetic preoccupations. The glaring example of this is the casual manner of most of her male subjects' looking at the vocation of writing undertaken by their spouses as a mere pastime hobby which once again adhere to the norms of the sexist dichotomies of female intuition/male intellect. Janice Doanne and Devon Hodges in Nostalgia and Sexual Difference compares the power of a writing women with the monstrous Amazon, the image of a superlative female, the suitable opponent for the most virile heroes. They

observe “the vision of women in power graphically displays the myth of the feminist as an Amazon whose sexual energy, aggression and desire to write is dangerous to male potency and discourse” (Doane and Hodges, 1987:35). Though none of Deshpande’s female writers are aggressively feminist yet the very act of writing is indeed a threat to most of her male subjects. In fact their non acceptance is nothing but an indirect expression of the fear for the intellectual power of a woman which they try to curb by discouraging the very process of writing. Jaya in That Long Silence held her husband Mohan responsible for her identity crisis as a writer. In Binding Vine the attitude of an accomplished poet Venu towards Mira’s poems depicts a similar discrimination when he tells her:

Why do you need to write poetry? It is enough for a young woman like you to give birth to children. That is your poetry. Leave the other poetry to us men. (127)

The professional hazards that a male imposes to a female competitor is exhibited in the behavior of the male colleagues of Madhu like Dalvi in Small Remedies. Dalvi exposes his rivalry for his female colleague in a revengeful manner by his obvious bodily advances towards Madhu to mentally harass her in her work place. In the same novel a similar dismissive attitude towards female professionalism from the male front is depicted in the role played by Savitribai’s Guruji Kashinath Buwa. “To him she was just another young woman from a well to do family, trying to get some excitement into her life by associating with music, with artists.”(129). Initially he did not take her as his student because he considered that music was no profession for a respectfully married woman, and himself being a traditional man he didn’t want her to step out of her traditional role. Malashri Lal in her The Law of the Threshold, locates her feminist theorizing in significations of “home” and “not home”. She applies “Indocentric approach” and argues that traditionally “men pass over threshold unchallenged” while “for women a step over the bar is an act of transgression” (12). Deshpande’s protagonists are examples of women who make complex negotiations in the space on and around the

threshold, thereby giving an intellectual threat to her male counterparts. Deshpande through the male "I" in Badri in Moving On exposes the reaction towards the vocation of writing adopted by a woman in a male dominated society. Badri himself being a doctor by profession neglected his wife Vasu's faculties as a writer. Only much later in his final stages of cancer when he penned down his confessions in a diary he realized how intellectually biased he had been to her. Badri in his dairy also mentions a so called accomplished author whose patronizing and condescending comment on Vasu's writing in a press conference hurt her ego so deeply that she completely secluded herself from the literary world. The chief predicament of a woman writer is the non-acknowledgement of her intellectual authenticity behind her woman's skin. Deshpande herself falling prey to being marginalized as a women writer uses a male "I" in her narratives to prove her creative faculties beyond the expression of feminine concerns to the complications of masculinity.

Sexual perversion in masculinity also finds apt representation within the confined space of Deshpande's domestic world. The voyeuristic eye of the male gaze and the perverse will of the body through Eros are depicted in the male subjectivity through the three rapes that Deshpande represents in her plots. One is rape within marriage in Binding Vine, and a brutally violent rape by the victim's uncle in the same novel, while the third is the rape of a minor by her brother-in-law in Moving On. In all the three cases the crime is perpetrated by a person close to the victim. Rape is a kind of violence within masculinity the ramifications of which can be contextualized within the larger debates about the perceived contribution of men to the newfound levels of civil disorder and the apparent retreat of men from civic responsibilities. A study based on crime against women says that women are more likely to report being assaulted by a relative or an intimate partner (Craven, 1996). Deshpande by commenting on rape exposes a rampant evil caused by masculine disorder within our society making women its innocent victims. Further perversion in the form of sadism is also seen in the sexual assaults of Manu in The Dark Holds No Terrors which he used as a camouflage for his impotence.

Legitimization crisis is a problem constantly faced by most of the central female protagonists of Shashi Deshpande dominantly from the male front. It is seen that the male subjects in the nature of fathers, brothers, husbands or lovers perennially act as the legitimizing agents in the personal and professional growth of the female subject. Boozie in The Dark Holds no terrors, Naren in Roots and Shadows, Kamat in That Long Silence, to some extent Chandru in Small Remedies, and Raja in Moving On are some such examples of male subjects who indulges in uplifting the morale of the female protagonists by making her realize her hidden talents and move forward with her aims. Thus the male "I" though marginalized in terms of narrativity, yet by being a constant legitimizing agency reinforces patriarchal standards in the otherwise predominant feminine space of the narratives.

Another significant marker of male subjectivity in her novels is alienation, which can be identified in terms of a nonchalant behavior regarding social and family responsibility. Naren, Deshpande's anti- hero in Roots and Shadows depicts alienation from the normal codes of life with a sense of disbelonging which hints at the tendencies of a certain existential angst in his psyche. In That Long Silence the author portrays the problem of social alienation in male subjectivity through the subjectivization of Ravi and Makarand Mama and to some extent Kamat who shows an andocentric tendency of problematizing ones social existence as a whole. Urmi's husband Kishore in Binding Vine falls in the list of one of many detached and alienated male subjects within Deshpande's coterie of marginal male characters. In A Matter of Time Gopal by alienating himself from his family basically aimed at shattering a stereotypical masculine ideal of being a caretaker and a bread earner imposed on a male subject by patriarchy. Strands of alienation can be marked in Shyam in Moving On in his persistent demands to be alone when caught in domestic rifts with his wife. The guilt of perversion of the body through Eros faced by Shyam after the heinous crime of raping his minor sister in law, finally led him to commit suicide in a similar situation of paranoiac alienation and death as faced by Naren in Roots and Shadows.

Deshpande's male subjects efficiently **play the** role of a dutiful son by **sanctifying** his father's wish in a traditional manner. **The** quotation from Brahad-aranakya Upanishad, in the second part of A Matter Of Time is relevant in her construction of this particular aspect of Indian masculinity:

Whatever wrong has been done **by him**,  
His son frees him from it all;  
Therefore he is called a son. By **his son** a father stands firm in  
this world.

From the point of view of the above statement, Gopal in A Matter of Time can be positioned ironically as the dutiful son who **denounces** worldliness of a householder to carry out penance for the wrongs done by his **father in** indulging in incest by **marrying his** dead brother's wife. In The Dark holds no terrors Saru's father's accompaniment Madhav acts the role of a surrogate son to **recreate the** presence of Dhruva the **long lost** son who met an accidental death when he was **only seven**. In That Long Silence Mohan always judged his son's actions in terms of **his own** relationship with his father, and expected his son Rahul to be dutibound to him **in a like manner**. Despite the fact that he wanted to go abroad, Amrut in Binding Vine **carried** out the role of a dutiful son, by sanctifying his father's wish even after his **death by** preparing for the IAS. By focusing on the career dreams of Urmi's father which **Amrut unquestioningly** carried forward Deshpande makes a comment on the bourgeois **ideals** upheld by the Indian Middle Class. Raja acting out the role of a surrogate son in Moving On provided **unflinching help** during Badri's fight with cancer, which **compensated** for the latter's lack of a son.

Though the male order in Shashi Deshpande's world is conventionally guided by patriarchy, there are no doubt progressive **male** characters and non-conformists as discussed in the course of this dissertation. But **the complication** behind this progressive order is that a liberal male subject meets an **early death** in most of Deshpande's plots. This is first visible in one of her early novels Roots And Shadows where a radically progressive male subject Naren is dismissed **conveniently** from the plot with his suicidal death to create an emotional crisis in Indu's life. In That Long Silence Appa's sudden

death turned futile Jaya's career dreams to eventually end up in marriage with Mohan. This is an instance of an early departure of a progressive male subject from the plot to bring about a crisis in the life of the central protagonist. Appa's death created a deep existential crisis in Jaya's psyche. Another instance of a progressive male subject's convenient erasure from the plot is through the mysterious death of Kamat. Similar example of an early departure of a progressive male subject from the plot is the death of Madhu's father in Small Remedies when she was just fifteen to bring about a crisis in her life. Early erasure of liberal male subjects from the plots can be defined as a reaffirmation of patriarchy in her jargon, which doesn't allow full freedom for the females trapped within its domain.

Deshpande is trying to suggest a kind of comparison of Indian philosophy pertaining to gender relationships with the radical theories of psychoanalysis of the West in the characterization of her male subjects. The fusion of both the Indian and western ideologies in the delineation of her male characters is one of the recurrent motifs in all the novels that I have taken for detailed study. Though all her plots are purely based on Indian settings, influence of western ideas in her characters forms a realistic representation of the increasingly changing conventional Indian lifestyle. Thus it is not surprising when in Gopal both Camus like existential crisis of a feeling of alienation and psychoanalytical problem of Oedipus Complex coexist. This finally leads to his forsaking the householder's role or "*Grihastha ashram*" to carry out a self proclaimed exile emulating the traditional Indian sages. Similarly Badri an ardent believer in the medical science being a doctor himself is at the same time influenced by the Vedic philosophy of wholeness of body or *nirvana*. Shashi Deshpande also comes within a denarrativizing moment when she offers her male subject the chance to indulge in his concomitant "unquiet pleasure" of masochism through the male "I". Some feminists have even gone so far as to assert that the growing passivity of males is the unconscious confession of a guilt which shades into downright masochism. Men's desire to be dominated by a masterful woman is seen as a manifestation of their shame in the face of their own sexuality, and the shame once visited upon women is now taken by men themselves. (Carter, 1979: 27) Naren's suicide after his sexual association with Indu, a socially and

financially advanced woman in comparison to him, can also be located as guilt ridden from a masochistic angle as well as from traditional Indian sexual codes which adjudicates copulation between cousins as incest. Thus both western and Indian concepts are relevant in analyzing the intricacies inherent in Deshpande's peripheral male characters which problematizes their subjectivity and define the complications of the male "I" in her novels.

Elaine Showalter in her essay "Critical Cross-dressing: Male Feminism and the woman of the year" warns feminists of the seduction of "male theory" in general and post structuralism in particular which lures a female writer away from the appeal of the personal narrative. Deshpande's narrative strategy of inclusion of a male "I" is partly close to being seduced by "male theory", because by incorporating a marginal male perspective she tries to escape the criticism of solely focusing on a feminist consciousness. It a part of her association with the male principle by which she seeks to compete with men instead of becoming fully aware of her role as a women writer. If Deshpande is transgressive in her appropriation of masculinist discourse and is genuinely insightful in identifying a need to resolve the cultural tension between masculine artistry and feminine affectivity, then she is cautiously conservative in her vision of gender. Rather than wishing away the contradiction of her position as a woman who empowers herself by speaking the language of the fathers through the male "I", one cannot undermine the fact that the dual perspective of both the feminine and the masculine in the narrative is itself a product of ideological contradictions. Such ideological contradictions in fact bring out the true worth of a narrative to authenticate a writer's creative potentialities irrespective of his/ her gender.

It is difficult and also reductive to come to a concrete solution to Deshpande's seemingly contradictory position on gender. Deshpande's own idea of being a "humanist" instead of a feminist is self contradictory because there is as an obvious othering of the male as peripheral in her novels. It is sharply from her female point of view that she internalizes the culturally conditioned and received image of the Indian male in constructing them as peripheral or relational characters but never the centre of the narrative. Even Gopal in A Matter of time and Baba in Moving On in whom the male "I"

finds a direct narrative voice are not the central protagonists. To reverse Simone de Beavour's words, in Deshpande's fictional world, the woman is the subject she is the 'Absolute' \_\_\_ it is the man who is the other. But that is no criteria to categorize her as a firebrand feminist in the westernized style. Although there is subversion in terms of using the marginal male "I" there is however no radical feminist stance in Deshpande, nevertheless she focuses on favoring professional equality for both the genders. What Deshpande experiments is a mode of feminism which is feasible in a conservative society of small town middle class India based on compatible grounds to resolve the competition of gender politics. My gynocritical endeavor of reading both the masculine and feminine traditions in Deshpande has proved fruitful to a large extent in terms of understanding the complications of gender relationships in her novels. Yet I would like to maintain that inspite of a subversive resistance of marginalizing the male "I" in terms of narrative voice there is an obvious internalizing of patriarchy in her narrative jargon. Deshpande has dealt commendably with the various facets of male subjectivity and has no doubt challenged patriarchal norms by marginalizing the male perspective; yet she seems to have no strong hold in creating fascinating male characters. Her feminine space overpowers the creative realm of her male domain which preeminently establishes her position as a woman writer. The stereotypical feminine need of gaining male affirmation constantly haunts her female protagonists, while the male subjects who seek to subvert patriarchal norms are either social misfits or alienated figures that face an early death leaving the female protagonist in a state of crisis. This exposes the social reality through her plots that complete erasure of patriarchy in India is still an incomplete venture and the struggle against sexism has to go on. Authentication of her own profession as a writer not just a "woman writer" is part of her project away from sexism. Her inhibitions as a woman writer who deliberately posits a male "I" for legitimization is symbolically represented in the legitimization crisis of her thinking-writing female subjects. The repeated trope of reinforcement of patriarchy in her plots leads one to assume that her ongoing crisis as writer still seeks for a critical equilibrium.

Hence, I would like to conclude my dissertation by leaving the end words to the writer herself as mentioned in her essay "Of concerns, Of Anxieties":



My writing comes out of my consciousness of the conflict between the idea of myself as a human being and the idea that the society has of me as a woman. All this makes my writing very clearly women's writing.

Now after 26 years of writing I am able to define myself as a novelist and a short story writer. I don't think any qualifying words are necessary- not Indian not indo English, not woman, not feminist, not third world.  
(Deshpande, 1996: 109)

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