PATER noster, qui es in caelis, sanctificatur nomen tuum; adveniat regnum tuum; fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo et in terra

[Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be they name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven]

— LORD’S PRAYER

The word patriarchy literally means the rule of the father or the ‘patriarch’, and originally it was used to describe a specific type of “male-dominated family”—the large household of the patriarch which included women, junior men, children, slaves and domestic servants all under the rule of this dominant male. Further, with its roots in the Greek ‘Patros’, it was introduced by Kate Millet in Sexual Politics, 1970, to refer male to dominated power structure that form the basis of our society. Millet elaborated on how the power of ‘Patriarchy’ is maintained even in modern societies, where women have education, being given an access to financial resources and extensive civil and political rights. This is accomplished mainly by means of an ideological engineering of consent among women themselves. Thus, the picture of women’s oppression that emerges from Millet’s analysis is essentially that of an inferior colonization; women are socially conditioned to embrace their secondary status. Now it is used to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterise a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways. In South Asia, for example, it is called pitrasatta in Hindi, pidarshahi in Urdu and pitratontro in Bangla.

The subordination that women experience at a daily level, regardless of the class they might belong to, takes various forms—discrimination, disregard, insult, control, exploitation, oppression, violence—within the family, at the place of work, in society. The details may be different, but the
theme is the same; a sense of preference for male issue is evident from the following exhortation:

“I heard my family was unhappy when I was born. They wanted a boy;” “My brothers could demand food, they could stretch out their hands and take what they wanted. We were told to wait for it to be given. We sisters and our mother had to make do with whatever was left over”, indicates that there is discrimination against girls even in food-distribution. They are treated as a burden, yet they have to bear the burden of domestic work, as they think, “I have to help my mother with the household work, my brothers don’t”; hey are denied the opportunities to receive education—“I was a struggle to go to school. My father thought it was not necessary for us girls to study”; mobility and liberty is not allowed to girls—“I could not go out to meet friends or to play. My brothers can come back at any time but I have to be back before dark”; wife is to tolerate the agonies of being beaten. “My father used to often beat my mother.”

A woman has to play subservient role—“My brothers are worse than my father. They don’t want me to talk to any boys”, and at every door step sexual harassment awaits her—“Because I was not willing to give in to the demands of my boss, I was thrown out of my job”.

“I have no share in my father’s property. My husband’s property is also not mine. Actually there is no home. I can call my own.” “I have to submit my body to my husband whenever he wants it. I have no say. I fear sex. Don’t enjoy it”; sex is a terror, not delight for a woman.

“I wanted my husband to use family planning methods but he refused. He also did not give me permission to get operated myself,” indicates that there is no control over fertility or reproductive rights.

The feeling and experience of subordination destroy self-respect, self-esteem and self-confidence and set limits on women’s aspirations. Every courageous act, they perform to assert themselves, is condemned as ‘unfeminine’. Women are called beparda (shameless) as soon as they try to step out of their defined spaces and roles. Norms and practices which
define them an inferior to men, which impose controls on them, are present everywhere. Feminists use it like a concept, and like all other concepts it is a tool to help them understand their realities. Juliet Mitchell, a feminist psychologist, uses the word patriarchy to refer to Kinship system which men exchange women, and to the symbolic power that fathers exercise within these systems. This power, she says, is responsible for the “inferiorised” psychology of women. Sylvia Walby calls it,

a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.¹

It is a popular belief that men are born to rule and women to obey, while the contrary viewpoint is provided by those who think that patriarch, by virtue of being man is unnatural and thus subject to change. Traditionalists everywhere accept patriarchy as biologically determined. According to Gerda Lerner,

Traditionalists, whether working within a religious or a ‘scientific’ framework, have regarded women’s subordination as universal, God-given, or natural, hence, immutable what has survived, survived because it was best, it follows that it should stay that way.²

The argument holds water when it is provided with the logical force that men, having greater physical strength become hunter and providers—and extension warriors—while women, because they produce children and are engaged in nurturing and mothering, require protection by men. This biological, deterministic explanation, she says, comes down, unbroken, from the stone-age to present times and it believes that man is born superior. Aristotle propounded similar ‘theories’ and called males active, females passive. It is propounded that female was “mutilated male”, someone who does not have a soul; the biological inferiority of women makes her inferior also in her capacities, her reasoning faculty and therefore metamorphoses her to be incapable of making decisions, for man is superior and woman inferior, he is born to govern and she, born to be governed with utmost passivity; the dictum is well known that “the courage of man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying”. Feminist ideology aims at pointing out that modern psychology has also perpetuated an identical view point,
by virtue of claiming that women’s anatomy and corresponding biological need determines their psychological built up also; and, therefore, their abilities and roles are entirely distinct. Sigmund Freud, the Austrian psychiatrist stated that for woman ‘anatomy is destiny’; in his ken of thought process normal human was male, the female, in his viewpoint a deviant human being lacking a penis, whose entire psychological structure supposedly centred around the struggle to compensate for this deficiency; thus man was a Priapus and woman a sheath like receptacle. Freudian doctrine became the prescriptive text for educators, social workers and the general public; hence patriarchy remains ambiguous and inexplicable even today.

However, a convincing explanation for the origin of patriarchy was provided by Frederick Engels that “women’s subordination began with the development of private property”, when according to him “the world historical defeat of the female sex”, took place. According to him, both the division of classes and the subordination of women developed historically. There was a time when there were no discriminations of class and gender; society was a tridimensional structure comprising—Savagery, barbarism, and civilization. The beastly existence of mankind during savagery was limited merely to food and hunting; dynastic descent was determined through maternal nomenclature, as the institution of marriage was non extant therein, and the consideration of property could not be dreamt of.

Gathering and hunting continued during the phase of barbarism and with the emergence of agriculture and taming animals, man started moving further afield to hunt, while women stayed at home in order to take care of children and to looking after the homestead. This led to a kind of sex oriented division of labour, however reins of authority were held by women to some instinct; they had control over the gens (clans or communities with a common origin). Within the gens there were no classes but there were conflicts between one gen and another. With the development of animal husbandry the basic understanding of impregnation was developed, and this gave rise to the manufacture of bigger and mightier weapons useful for a bigger hunt exploits and adventure, and sometimes in inter communal struggles also. Thus emerged the ideology and practice
of slavery, when gens started acquiring animals and slaves, especially female slaves; this led to more division among the sexes; men acquired power over others and started accumulating wealth in the form of animals and slaves: “All this led to the formation of private property. Men wanted to retain power and property, and pass it on to their own children. To ensure this inheritance, mother-right was overthrown.” William Shakespeare’s dictum of ‘Taming Of The Shrew’ saw light of the day during this period, and the independent existence of a woman was reduced to a tamed animal, leading to her confinement of sexuality under regulation and control; this made Engles think that in this period, both patriarchy and monogamy for women were established.

As there was a surplus production in areas controlled by men woman became economically dependent. Modern civilization, according to Engle’s was based on restricting women to the sphere of the home in order to produce heirs to inherit property; this was the beginning of the sexual double standard in marriage, with the emergence of state as ‘an assemblage of numerous families, the monogamous family changed into the patriarchal family in which wife’s household labour became a “private service, the wife became a head servant, excluded from all participation in social production”. “The overthrow of the mother right was the world historical defeat of the female sex. The man took command in the home also. The women was degraded and reduced to servitude; she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children.”

Gerda Lerner, assessing Engle’s contribution to the understanding of patriarchy writes;

Yet, Engels made major contributions to our understanding of women’s position in society and history; ...he defined the major theoretical question for the next hundred years.³

That patriarchy is a consequence, not of uterine biology, but of masculine gentetics, is supported by radical feminist thinkers, as Susan Brownmiller says: “Women have been subordinate because of men’s ability to rape them.”⁴ Her viewpoint that man uses his might to rape, to intimidate and
control women, has led to male dominance over women and to male supremacy. And Gerda Lerner,

Elizabeth Fischer ingeniously argued that the domestication of animals taught men their role in procreation and the practice of the forced mating of animals led men to the idea of raping women, she claimed that the brutalisation and violence connected with animal domestication led to men’s sexual dominance and institutionalised aggression.\(^5\)

Another radical feminist ideology aims at a psychoanalytical approach linking patriarchy to male oriented psychological need, as per Mary O’Brien’s observation that it is men’s psychological need to compensate for their ability to bear children which made them construct institutions of dominance. Radical feminist believes that on account of “their biology and/or psychology men and women belong to two separate classes. Men are the ruling class and they rule through the direct use of violence, which in time, becomes institutionalized.”\(^6\)

The five pillars of feminine existence providing support to the ceiling of male dominated patriarchy are her labour oriented productivity, reproductive capability, submissive sexuality provided by the Eternal Providence, confinement oriented mobility of mobily, and a sense of subservient dependence for the sake of property and resourcefulness.

Men control women’s productivity both within the household and outside, in paid work. Within the household all kinds of free service to their children, husbands and other members of the family throughout their lives. Housewives are the producing class, while husbands are expropriating class, it is an incredible irony that their back-breaking, endless and repetitive labour is not considered work at all and housewives became dependent on their husbands. Men also control women’s labour outside the home in several ways. They force their women in sell their labour or they may prevent them from working. This control over and exploitation of women’s labour means that men benefit materially from patriarchy; they derive concrete economic gains from the subordination of women. In other words, there is a material basis of patriarchy; this indicates that money makes the mare run, but money seldom goes to he mare.
The destiny of a woman forbids her from determining the number of children she can give birth to; when to have them, whether they can use contraception, or terminate a pregnancy etc. Apart from individual male control, male dominated institutions like the Church or state (i.e. religion and politics) also lay down rules regarding women’s reproductive capacity. This is institutionalised control. According to the radical feminists women are subjugated mainly because the burden of maternity and child care that is forced on them, by patriarchal societies. Patriarchy not only forces women to be mothers; it also determines the conditions of their motherhood, it creates and strengthens the divide between private and public, it restricts women’s mobility and growth and it reproduces male dominance.

Women are obliged to provide sexual services to their men according to their needs and desires. There is an existence of male oriented jurisprudence to restrict the expression of women’s sexuality as regards extra marital relationship in every society, where as customarily, a blind eye is turned towards male promiscuity and lasciviousness. At the other end of the spectrum men may force their wives, daughters or other women in their control into prostitution. Rape and the threat of rape is another way in which women’s sexuality is dominated through an invocation of ‘Shame’ and ‘honour’. In order to control women’s sexuality their dress, behaviour and mobility are carefully monitored by familial, social, cultural and religious codes of behaviour. With the partial exception of mothers, the male culture defines woman as sexual objects for male pleasure. It does not occur to a man’s mind, whether she derives any pleasure whatever; everywhere a Tiresias comes out proclaiming ‘out of ten parts of delight in amorous game, nine go to woman and one goes to man’.

A control over feminine mobility becomes a desideratum to precipitate the reins of control over a woman’s productivity, reproductive capability; that is why the imposition of parda, restrictions on leaving the domestic premises, a strict separation of private and public, limits on interaction between the sexes, and so on, all control women’s mobility and freedom in ways that are unique to them—that is, they are gender-specific, because men are not subjected to the same constraints.
The law of inheritance also comes under the control of patriarchy, as the property owned by the father goes down to the son; not only this, even where women have the legal right to inherit such assets, a whole array of customary practices, emotional pressurces, social sanctions and, sometimes, plain violence, prevent then from acquiring actual control over such property. In other cases, personal laws curtail their rights, rather than enhance them. In all cases, they have to remain contented and bear the brunt of a disadvantageous situation. This is amply illustrated by UN statistics:

Women do more than 60 percent of the hours of work done in the world; but they get 10 percent of the world’s income and own one percent of the world’s property.

Even the social infra-structure and certain institutions, when analysed do ‘the same tale repeat’.

The institution of the family, that basic unit of society, is probably the most patriarchal. A man is considered the head of the household; within the family he controls women’s sexuality, labour or production, reproduction and mobility. The family is also important for socialising the next generation in patriarchal values. It is within the family that we learn the first lessons in hierarchy, subordination, discrimination. Boys learn to assert and dominate, girls to submit, to expect unequal treatment.

According to Gerda Lerner,

The family not merely mirrors the order in the state and educates its children to fellow it, it also creates and constantly reinforces that order.  

Most modern religions present a patriarchal order as being supernaturally ordained. The feminine principle of power which existed before the evolution of institutionalised religious has suffered from gradual infirmity, goddesses, have been replaced by gods. By virtue of having been created by the upper and privileged caste, all the major religions have defined morality, ethics, behaviour and even law; they have laid down the duties and rights of men and women, the relationship between them. In Indian panorama, for instance, inspite of the fact that it is a secular country,
an individual’s legal identity with regard to marriage, divorce and inheritance is determined by his or her religion.

Laws pertaining to family, marriage, and inheritance are very closely lined to the patriarchal control over property. Systems of jurisprudence, the judiciary, judges and lawyers are, for the most part, patriarchal in their attitudes and in their interpretation of the law.

With in a patriarchal economic system, men control the economic institutions, own most property, direct economic activity, and determine the value of different productive activities. Most productive work done by women is neither recognised nor paid for; their contribution to the creation of surplus through what Maria Mies has called ‘Shadow Work’ is completely discounted, and housework is not evaluated at all as it is considered as a sacred duty. Moreover, women’s role as producers and rearers of children and of labour power is not considered an economic contribution at all.

Almost all political institutions in society, at all levels, are male dominated, from village councils to parliament. There are only a handful of women in political parties or organisations which decide the fate of our countries. Even when a woman is at the helam of affairs, the denset machina is her husband or some other male member of the family.

Media are very important tools in the hands of upper class, upper caste men to propagate class and gender ideology. Massages about male superiority and female inferiority are repeated constantly; violence against women is rampant, especially in films. As with other sectors, women are highly under-represented in the media, professionally, and biases in reporting, coverage, advertising and messaging are still very sexist, for the erogenous exposure has become a sine qua non for a woman on the screen.

Ever since learning and education became formal and institutionalised, men have assumed control over whole areas of knowledge, philosophy, theology, law, literature, the arts, science. This male hegemony over the creation of knowledge marginalised women’s knowledge and experiences, their expertise and aspirations. In many cultures women were systematically prevented from studying the scriptures, and even today there are very few
who are allowed to reinterpret religions and legal texts, howsoever intelligent they might be. According to some feminists,

Patriarchal thought and knowledge are characterised by divisions, distinctions, opposes mind to matter, self to order reason to emotion, and enquirer to object of enquiry. In each of these opposition one side of the dualism is valued more than the other. Patriarchal knowledge systems are also seen to emphasise specialisation, to be narrowly compartmentalised and fragmented and unable to see the wholeness of phenomena.  

Male dominated knowledge and education have created and perpetuated patriarchal ideology, created what Sylvia Walby calls, “a variety of gender differentiated forms of subjectivity”. Men and women behave, think, aspire differently because they have been taught to think of masculinity and femininely in ways which condition difference.

Even though the nuclear theme of patriarchy finds its endorsement in the entire arena of Shashi Deshpande’s fictional-bulk, for the male despot, in one form or the other dominates the range of action, conflict, compromise and resolution or catastrophe as the case may be, the analytical approach in the present context has been focussed on the primary findings that Saru, in The Dark Holds No Terrors is ever under the hallucination of parental dominance throughout the span of life, while rebellious Indu of Roots and Shadows becomes the determiner of never to yield to a society under the yoke of patriarchy.

Francis Bacon remarked in the essay Of Death, ‘Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark’; in the same corollary, Saru the protagonist, the prodigal daughter in Shashi Deshpande’s novel The Dark Holds No Terrors comes back to her parental house, with the essential difference, that she has, by this time, much travelled in the realms of rust iron in a span of fifteen years, and the scar of female Cain is still on her forehead, as she had been charged with fratricide, as the killer of her own brother Dhruva.
Nevertheless, she returns to seek refuge, unable to bear the barbarism of her husband. Her stay in her parents’ house gives her a chance to review her relationship with her husband, her mother, her children, and her dead brother Dhruva. The novel derives its strength, however, from the stark presentation of Saru’s childhood, her trauma of being an unloved child and the equally stark presentation of her marriage to a man who is consumed by an inferiority complex which manifests itself in the form of sexual sadism. She has travelled so much in the dark that she has become accustomed to gloom and finds nothing to be afraid of in all engulfing darkness.

The narrative vacillates between the present and the past, between the first person and the third, to focus on certain events in the past, which have been too deeply etched in the mind of the protagonist to be erased which, perhaps, have moulded and shaped her personality. She remembers how her mother discriminated between the son and the daughter and favoured Dhruva. His birthday and other religious rituals related to him are given top priority and celebrated with much pump and fanfare, whereas her birthday was a cause of agony of her mother, as she later recalls,

Birthdays were not then the tremendous occasions they are made out to be now; but the excitement of having one, of being the centre of attraction never palled. It was always a fascinating thought ... I was born. But of my birth, my mother had said to me once. ‘It rained heavily the day you were born. It was terrible’. And somehow, it seemed to me that it was my birth that was terrible for her, not the rain.10

Saru recollects how on her brother Dhruva’s birthdays, there was always a puja held in the evenings. She can not tolerate inequality between brother and sister.

They had named him Dhruva, I can remember, even now vaguely, faintly, a state of joyous excitement that had been his naming day. The smell of flowers, the black grinding stone (168).
Several identical scenes come down the memory lane of her mind and the Indian view of the girl as a liability and the boy an asset have an indelible imprint on her mind. Her father used to take Dhruva, out for a ride. He used to sit on the small seat specially fixed on the bar of the cycle giving rise to the impression that “daughters are their mother’s business”. Saru’s mother is much attached to her son and her attitude is a typical one—after all, he is male child and therefore one who well propagate the family lineage and is supposed to enlighten the name of the parents. In another sense, also, the male child is considered more important than a girl, because he is qualified to give ‘agni’ to his dead parents. The soul of the dead person would otherwise wander in inferno. The first thought, when Saru hears the news of her mother’s death, is: Who lit the pyre? She had no son to do that for her.”

As Sarbjit Sandhu remarks:

The mother is very attached to her son. Her attitude is a typical one—after all, he is male child and therefore one who will propagate the family lineage. In other sense, also, male child is considered more important than a girl, because he is qualified to give ‘agni’ to his dead parents. The soul of the dead person would otherwise wander in ferment.

Ragini Ramachandra however feels that this aspect of the story does not ring true. She writes;

The portrayal of Sarita’s mother who adored the son, and neglected the daughter seems to be weak point in the story. While one could accept a mother’s preference amongst her children. it seems rather incredible that she should live and die with curses on her lips for her female child, especially in the Indian context. The mother’s monstrosity seems to serve as a rallying point for the novelist to bring her feminist ideas together. Hence the nagging feeling that the book has an axe to grind.

There are subtle indications of love as well as of the unmatched relationship this mother shared with the father;
I went home and told her nothing but that I had obtained a first class. ‘Good’, she said. No more. But that night there was something special for dinner, something fried, something sweet, and I knew she was pleased, though her face told me nothing (140-41).

Such a relationship goes on to prove that speech is silver, but silence is golden, however, it is contrasted with the over eloquence of the daughter; this becomes obvious when the daughter asks her father whether he wants to listen to her story, whether they can, as daughter and father, separated in age by thirty years, talk about such things as the relationship between man and woman, he says;

‘Do you know, Saru, I often feel sorry that we left so many things unsaid, your mother and I. When she lay dying there 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 for us (199).

Saru’s hatred towards her mother drives her to leave home for Bombay to seek medical profession as a career. In the medical college she falls in love with a college mate and marries him against her parents’ wishes. Thus she sets the ball rolling against parental authority. Her orthodox mother was deadly against her daughter’s marrying a man from a lower caste; her mother uses a disgusting phraseology, which is an outcome of the disgust, hatred and prejudice of centuries.

When Dhruva was alive, her mother’s discrimination between the two had been very apparent to Sarita. The preference for boys is blatantly acknowledged in most Indian homes. It would be to simplistic to say that boys are preferred over girls because of dowry they bring in at the time of marriage. Our patriarchal society also considers only the male offspring as worthy enough to carry on the family line. Saru remembers that when she wanted to study in medical college, her mother had been against her studies. Though unsuccessful, her mother tried her best to persuade her husband not to send Saru to medical college:
You don’t belong to that (moneyed) class. And don’t forget, medicine or no medicine, doctor or no doctor, you still have to get her married, spend money on her wedding... Let her go for a B.Sc... you can get her married in two years and our responsibility will be over (130-31).

The power that the mother exudes repels her and changes her into a disenvenomed serpent. The archetypal terrible mother sees Saru only as a burden to be cased, a problem to be solved, a responsibility to be dispensed with and a person who has no right to any choice in life. Saru marrying Manu and her claim to have thereby severed the unbilical cord is an act of defiance proving her strength, power and self-reliance. The mother warns her; “I know all these ‘love marriages’... Don’t come crying to us then” (69) is a sure prediction of Saru’s future and failure. This shows the hidden truth of Shakespearean dictum, ‘men are April, when they woo, but they became December when they wed’. Later Saru’s hurt ago would not admit her miscalculations and defeat. Though she tries to learn from the mother what not to be, she ends up as an educated version of the mother herself blessed with two children Renu and Abhi, she remembers them staying in her father’s home. Renu’s verbal non-communication and eloquent mystifying expression in her drawing leave Saru nervous. She refers to Renu as “a woman despite her age, ‘a critical, cold, shrewed, objective observer”, reminiscent of her own mother. It speaks for Saru’s projection and the unconscious fear of getting rejected by the daughter. Thus the diabolical matron is paid back in the same coin. She also entertains fear of the repetition of the cycle in her own family as she finds in Renu’s jealously and rejection of Abhi a parallel of her attitude to Dhruva. She becomes inquisitive,

    do we travel, not in straight times, but in circles? Do we come to the same point again and again? Dhruva and I, Renu and Abhi... is life an endless repetition of the same pattern (173).

Saru recalls to her mind that her becoming a woman and all the time being reminded by her mother of the same;
You should be careful now about how you behave. Don’t come out in your peticoat like that. Not even when it’s only your father who is around (62).

In the verisimilitude of a traditional matriarch, Saru’s mother reminds her of the way of living which she should adopt and tradition which she should follow. Saru gives an account of her conversation with her mother;

Don’t go out in the sun, you’ll get even darker.
Who cares?
We have to care it, you don’t. We have to get you married.
I don’t want to get married.
Will you live with us all your life?
Why not?
You can’t
And Dhruva?
He’s different. He’s a boy (45).

This sort of blatant discrimination between Saru and her brother leads to a sense of insecurity, resulting into a contempt towards her parents, especially mother, and her consequent rebellious nature. Y.S. Sunita Reddy observes;

In this connection, Saru’s mother’s attitude is typical of most Indian mothers and a common enough phenomenon in the Indian context.\(^{13}\)

The turning point in her life comes when her brother is engulfed in his watery grave accidentally; the poor sister can do nothing but watching the entire scene in a helpless manner; throughout her life she is haunted by the memories of her mother accusing her of intentionally letting Dhruva die by drowning: “You did it. You did this. You killed him” (191). She never refutes the charge levelled against her by her mother. Premila Paul observes:

When the mother accuses her of murder, she speaks out Saru’s intentions and not the deed. Dhruva’s demise had
always been her subconscious desire and there is a very thin
demarcation between her wish and its fulfilment.\textsuperscript{14}

Saru feels in the grips of insecurity. After Dhruva’s death her lot deteriorated
from bad to worse. Irrespective of geographical or chronological, any Indian
girl is a victim of gender discrimination in the Indian social set up. As
Anandalakshmi opines;

The birth of a son gives a woman status and she invests
herself in her son’s fixture, creating a deep symbiotic bond.\textsuperscript{15}

Saru’s mother could be no exception to this and she loses interest in life
after her son’s death. She snatches every opportunity to reproach her and
takes no interest in her daughter’s education, career or future. This obvious
fact is significant factor in the Indian social set up. According to the research
conducted by S. Anandalakshmi, Director, Lady Irwin College, Delhi:

The supremacy of the male is so well established that the
average Indian is surprised to even be queried about it.
Whatever the ecology of social group, even in communities
where the woman may be the breadwinners, the male is
considered superior. Within the family the sense of inferiority
of the female is pervasive. The sex ratio is unfavourable for
girls and forces us to conclude that the survival of the girl is
a matter of indifference in a considerable number of families.\textsuperscript{16}

Saru’s mother discarded her daughter, which in every sense fills the
mind of the adolescent Saru with a feeling of hatred towards her mother.
The feeling is so intense that on attaining puberty she thinks of her mother
that detesting the fact that her body functioned in a similar manner as that
of her mother’s; such a womanhood is undesirable and is a hurdle in the
way of her independent existence. Saru is also filled with a sense of shame
at her monthly ordeal, she does not want to become an emblem of the
motto ‘mulier est utero’ [a woman is a womb] of menstruation period,
praying desperately for a miracle to put an end to it. She resents the
traditional practice in her orthodox home where she is treated like a pariah
during those three days when she is made to sleep on a straw with a
special cup and plate by her side in which she is served from a distance as her touch would mean pollution.

Devoid of love and security, she was possessed with the keen desire to be loved to madness, as Thomas Hardy’s Eustacia did. After meeting Manu she gets attention from him. Later when her relations become strained with Manu she regrets for having rushed into an overhasty marriage, which was a type of an unconditional surrender towards male supremacy.

The fisherman’s daughter was wiser. She sent the king to her father and it was the father who bargained with him, while I [...] I have gave myself up unconditionally. Unreservedly to him, to love him and to be loved.(66).

The circumstances that lead to her taking such a step, are curse in disguise descending from her own parents. As Sunita Reddy opines;

If her mother had provoked her by her blatant hostility, her father had contributed to her present predicament by remaining a mute spectator in the family drama.17

Usha Bande realises;

Thus, the little rebel of Yore who used to resent her mother’s gendre—bias mutely, becomes overtly defiant.18

After her marriage. Saru is hurt to hear from a mutual acquaintance that her mother has said, “Let her know more sorrow than she has given me.”(197) She even thinks at one point that she is ‘unhappy and destroyed’ in her marital life because her mother has cursed her. But gradually her hostile attitude towards her mother changes to a positive one. She even begins to see her mother, as the creative essence of the feminine. She makes efforts to understand her and even identify herself with her mother. The wisdom dawns upon her that the destiny of a woman remains the same, whether the marriage is love marriage, or an arranged one.

Saru’s mother, a symbol of Indian orthodoxy, hates her for being a girl; now the dominating Indian husband takes himself for a demi God and treats her as an unpaid servant. Since her childhood Saru had the deep-
rooted mentality of an unwanted child. The deep-seated hatred in Saru towards the favouritism shown to her brother by her parents makes her think of blotting Dhruva out of the family. The struggle for importance is seen when she thinks;

    I must show Baba something, ‘anything’ to take his attention away from Dhruva sitting on his lap ... I must make him ignore Dhruva (32).

The charge of deliberate fratricide levelled against the poor sister and that too from her own mother’s side, puts Saru in the dock of a certain guilt consciousness haunting her like Abel’s ghost haunting Cain in the *Holy Bible*; she refutes or denies the charge of the murder except in the confession to her father. Saru has always felt on inner desire to make him the mythical Dhruva (pushed off the father’s lap by the step brother) and Dhruva in death becomes a tantalizing North Star controlling her happiness from afar. She is totally alienated from the family: “I just didn’t exist for her(the mother)... I died long before I left home”. (32) She has contempt for the traditional concept according to which the sole purpose of a woman’s existence is to please her husband. She remembers Mai Kaki’s advice to keep her hands soft and smooth, so that her, that ‘husband will never let go of them’ (163), she has failed to please him, as the domesticated wife became a famous doctor and he turned out to be simply a lecturer. This made her socially economically his superior. The ego clash became inevitable because, now she is “something more than his wife and he has become what he is”. This upside down alteration—“This terrible thing” is detrimental to their marriage. This simmering inferiority complex of Manu burst out the day a girl had come to interview her who asked Manu, “How does it feel when your wife earns not only butter but the bread as well?” Since the day Manu became a sadist. Deshpande shows how emancipation and success for a woman in the patriarchal Indian society can cause subversion of roles in the family and puts an end to matrimonial delight. Manu remained as a normal human being in the day but assaulted her like an animal in the night. This is what the carbuncular did to the typist girl in T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* Saru realises that because of her career there is something wrong in their marriage
and she thinks of leaving her job and to be simply his housewife because she cannot bear the shattering of her dream into fragments: “the eternal female dream of finding happiness through a man” (124). She continues her job as Manu wants so. But this acceptance of her role as the leading earning member of the family expresses her anguish through the imaginary advice given by her to the girls in Nalu’s college:

A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband...That’s the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage. Don’t ever try to reverse the doctor-nurse, executive-secretary, principal-teacher role... Women’s magazines will tell you that a marriage should be an equal partnership. That’s nonsense. Rubbish No partnership can be ever equal... It will always be unequal, but take care that it’s unequal in favour of your husband. If the scales tilt in your favour, god help you, both of you. (137)

She acknowledges this as the way of the world perhaps leading to domestic bliss in the traditional sense of the term, but she would take path scarcely trodden, making her realise that all the roads lead not to Corinth. In her childhood and youth the mother too torments her by projecting the value of male-dominated society:

‘You’re growing up’, she would say. And there was something unpleasant in the way she looked at me ...And it becomes shameful, this growing up so that you had to be ashamed of yourself...” (62).

Erikson points out the sex difference:

It takes it for granted that boys love the outdoors and girls indoors, or at any rate that they see their respective roles assigned to the indoors of houses and to the great outdoors of adventure, to tranquil feminine love for family and children and to masculine aspiration.
Saru’s mother seldom loses the opportunity of scolding her daughter, and this fills the adolescent daughter’s mind with a mother oriented hatred. As Adesh Pal observes :

For Saru the very ‘mother’ stands for old traditions and rituals, for her mother sets up a bad model, which distorts her growth as a woman, as a being...thus the strange childhood experiences false up her inflated ego and her thirst for power over others.20

On account of gender discrimination providing priority to a male offspring, Saru, the enraged Electra of Indo-Anglian Fiction, feels the umbilical chord broken, when she precipitates herself into a voluntary exile, as the first public revolt against patriarchal system. Her marriage is a means to get away from her mother as P. Ramamoorthi says :

The departure of the heroine from the mother is the first step towards autonomy, for, the mother is the first pedagogue of the do’s and don’ts on the woman.21

To Saru, the knot of matrimony is not always a bloom of heavenly bliss, for the wife in a traditional and male dominated society is destined to face that her ‘heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains’ her ‘sense as though of hemlock’ she ‘had drunk’, such is ‘the draught of vintage’ that the reality of life has in store for her; that is why the ‘dome of many coloured glass’ comprising autonomy and self realization is ‘trampled into fragments’. Saru, a successful doctor, is sexually abused by her not so-successful teacher husband “This was not be death by strangulation; it was a monstrous invasion of my body”. (11-12) Although she neither possess the self-effacing quality of her mother nor the resignation of her grandmother, she is still unwilling to publicize the relationship she has with Manu, her husband, for it is like venereal diseases that cannot be revealed. As the very idea of divorce goes too much against her grains, she ‘cannot see which way to go’ except going back to the deserted courtyard of her Babul (father); her confusion, loss of hope, thoughtlessness and recluse have taught her that in the park of married life ‘daowns are not all poetry there’. Alienated from her husband, she comes to her parental house to see her sense of belonging
to the world but the same eludes her. Initially, as Saru comes to her father’s house, she feels like a ‘stranger’ as Sudama standing at the gates of the palace of Krishna and Rukmini, or Ulysses in Ithaca, where the existence has become a name. She is conscious that she is no ‘Sudama’ in rags, bare feet and filled with humanity; when she gets a cold reception at her father’s house, she regrets her visit; “Why had it seemed to important to come here, and, at once”? (17).

Having undergone the experience of the return of the native, when she narrated her plight to her father, she hard cherished the great expectations of a sympathetic attitude from him, but, when she finds that the blind Oedipus has turned his ears deaf to his Antigone, and starts blaming her only for all the domestic break up and consequent breakdown, finding in putting rice on the stove some sort of objective correlative, Saru goes down the memory lane and recalls the obliterated destiny of one of her friends:

If mine had been an arranged marriage, if I had left it to them to arrange my life, would he have left like this? She thought of the girl, the sister of a friend, who had come home on account of a disastrous marriage. She remembered the care and sympathy with which the girl had been surrounded, as if she was an invalid, a convalescent. And the girl’s face with its look of passive suffering. There had been only that there, nothing else, neither despair nor shame. For the failure had not been hers, but her parents, and so the guilt had been theirs too, leaving only the suffering for the girl (218-19).

She dislikes her husband’s pretensions attitude and thinks that Manu needs a woman to warm his bed and this can be done only by a woman, who is subservient and obedient. Saru’s observation as a lady doctor and her content for martyred women suffering meekly underline her feminist ideas;

The myriad complaints, the varying symptoms, she thought, if put together, would provide a world of data for a treatise
on the condition of women. Backache, headache, leucorrhoea, menorrhagia, loss of appetite, burning feet, an itch ‘there’... all the indignities of a woman’s life, borne silently and as long as possible, because, ‘how do you tell anyone about these things?’(107)

Saru’s psyche is always tormented by the introspective sense of guilt that her over assertiveness was the root cause of all the troubles; not only this, it was the inner instinct that made her so cruel as to precipitate death over Dhruva, the cloud of a sullenness over her mother and a type of hypertension over her own husband : “The facade of deception had cracked so completely...Shafts of truth pierced her, causing her unbearable pain”(212). She remonstrates against the injustice done to her by her unwillingness to comply unconditionally with the accepted norms. Her rebellious attitude that the society, including her husband, her children and even her father, should realise her existence as something more than a mere wife, daughter and sister, undergoes a type of abortion, as she is destined to return to her deserted husband, for she is not possessed with that essential boldness, that is a desideration premium for such an attitude, and hence she is in capable of breaking the traditional bondage. Saru realizes that there is no escape. It is an individual’s own life. One will have to shape as well as face the events of one’s life. The epigraph of the novel says ;

You are your own refuge,
There is no other refuge,
This refuge is hard to achieve
(The Dhammapada)

She understands that neither her father nor her husband can be her refuge. She is her own refuge. She has to overcome herself; she has to eliminate the hallucination of the ghost that haunts her; she has to find her own way to salvation. The parental home initiates the protagonists into an understanding of the meaning of human life. Now Saru, who has instructed her father not to open the door for her husband, now tells her father;
And oh yes, Baba, if Manu comes, tell him to wait. I’ll be back as soon as I can (221).

*The Dark Holds No Terrors* establishes a woman in a multi-dimensional role of a daughter, sister and wife, and having faced failure on every front of struggle, she comes back to her parents house and that too has been alienated for her; and she like the Vampire of the Indian classic *Dwartrinshat Puttalika Simhasam* has to perch over the branch again. An entirely new horizon is opened up with the emergence of *Roots and Shadows* for here the struggle is within; the woman has to fight against her inner instinct; the gender-discrimination is metamorphosed into sex discrimination, subversion and exploitation; Priapus is destined to climb over muns veneris; this is what is indicated by a voyage from logo cenriticism to phallscentricism.

Broadly inspired by the thinking and intellectual strategies of Jacques Derrida, her (Helene Cixous’s) whole theoretical project can in one sense be summed up as the effort to undo this logocentric ideology; to proclaim woman as the source of life, power and energy and to hail the advent of a new, feminine language which ceaselessly subverts these patriarchal binary schemes where logocentrism colludes with phallacentricism in an effort to oppress and silence women.22

*Roots and Shadows* is a novel which explores the inner struggles of Indu, the protagonist who presents a set of modern women who are educated and are very much in a contact with society, dealing with the critical problem in this patriarchal atmosphere. Deshpande unveils the subtle process of oppression and gender differentiation at work in the family and in the male oriented society. Gender roles are conceived enacted and learnt within a complex of relationship. Indu comes back to her ancestral place from where she, against the wishes of her father and the other members of the family had accepted so many years ago to get married to a person of her own choice. She comes back to attend the funeral ceremony of Akka, the old rich termagant.
Deshpande presents that to demarcate and divide the society on sexual lines is an age-old social practice in Indian society. Indu was left by her father when she was hardly 15 days old, who did not return to her for over one year, although she lost her mother at birth, she was brought up in a family where tradition under the patriarchal roof is strongly supported and straying from it is considered a treacherous act. On the contrary, since education and modernity are slowly creeping into the younger generation, specially among the people like Indu, tradition is anathema to them. Kaka tells Indu, “elders were to be feared, respected, obeyed. We used to sit up when they entered the room, and touch their feet when we went out,...You youngsters now...you’re a different breed altogether.23

The curse of widowhood, swallowing the existence of a woman, especially in a peninsular Indian society, wherein the violation of certain norms is considered to be a sufficient cause for inflicting all kinds of tortures such as tonsured head, reduction to a certain limit of untouchability is not unknown to Indu; this is visible in Atya’s life, which makes Indu think: “She had had a hard life, what else can a childless widow expect? Her in-laws had, true to tradition, ill-treated her after her husband’s death” (36). The same life of another widow in the family is described by Indu. There had always been a nameless old women, invariably called Kaku, to help in the kitchen (116). Seeing her position Indu wants to converse her asked her name:

These women ... they are called Kaku and Kaki, Atya and Vahini, Ajji and Mami. As if they have to be recognised by a relationship, because they have no independent identity of their own at all. And in the process, their own names are forgotten. How does it feel not even to have a name of your own? There are women who are proud of having their names changed by their husbands during their wedding ceremonies. To surrender your name so lightly (117).

The woman’s replies,

I know my name. I have not just one, but two good names. One given to me by my father when I was born and the other by my husband when I got married (117).
Akka, ‘the fiery termagant’ and a mighty matriarch, needs special mention, for she knows the art of carving a niche for herself in the wall wherever it be; this becomes evident, when, after the demise of her husband, she determines not only to stay in her brother’s life, but to pull and loose the purse-string also; her envenomed tongue reduces Indu’s grandfather Kaka into a tongue tied, submissive character; she is also very particular about how a girl should conduct herself in society and reprimands Indu her talking to a boy in the library “Standing there in that corner alone with that boy…” (74)

When Indu tries to clarify herself. She becomes angry,

That’s enough of such talk, and even if you did nothing. It’s bad enough, being talked about, why, three people have spoken to me about it since yesterday. And to your Kaka as well. No girl in our family has ever been talked about. You have to promise such as thing won’t happen again (74).

She is also deadly antagonistic to the idea of Naren’s mother wanting to learn music as she has a special liking for male issues: “Akka kept all her softness for boys. They say even Madhava’s Sunil got something out of her the last time he came here.” (62)

Mini, Indu’s cousin, too is a victim of the evils of patriarchal structure; her cradle is surrounded by the railings of strict supervision, guidance and restrictions; she is always reminded of the duties that are obligatory upon her, as she is a female offspring; that is why Indu always considers her as a child.

Mini had always been very much of a with small old chores from a very young age, waiting on her father and brothers and being generally docile. Our world rarely touched. (122)

Through Mini’s life, Deshpande highlights the socially accepted yet unjust tradition in compliance with which the average Indian girl is brought up. Thus the limitation of choice makes Mini to marry whoever is willing. Being asked by Indu why she is marrying the man whom she does not know she replies,
I went to school because... I had to. And then to college because Akka said I must go. Boys prefer graduates these days. ...I have to get married. This is not my home, is it? (125) You know it isn't. Ever since we were small, we were told... “You’ll be going away one day to your own home”. They said it to you and me, never to Hemant or Sumant or Sharad or Sunil (125).

The domineering attitude of Akka, without any touch of self aggrandisement, aims at the noble cause of keeping the family intact, the fact that is enough to eliminate the charges of personal overvaulting ambition, selfishness and snobbery, usually levelled against such women; the humanitarian goal underlying such an attitude is that family ensures security and happiness to all its members.

That Shashi Deshpande aims at exposing parental prejudice against the female offspring is proven by the observation that, apart from showing every type of interest about the academic well being of his deceitful son Sunil, Madhav Kaka, the patriarch does not take trouble of even knowing what classes his daughters are in; Vinayak has his appetite for his youngest daughter. Thus under the prevailing social, cultural and family structure woman are, in one way or another, the Cinderalla whatever position they occupy in the society or family. As long as society remains patriarchal in its role allocation and division of labour, the culture of the second sex is bound to be eclipsed. Toril Moi posits her theory taking a cue from Simone de Beauvoir’s rejection that as a social construct “one is’not born a woman but one becomes one”.

Seen in this perspective, patriarchal oppression consists of imposing certain social standard of feminity on all biological women, is order precisely to make us believe that the chosen standard for ‘feminity’ are natural. Thus a woman who refuses to conform can be labelled both, *Unfeminine and unnatural*. Patriarchy, in other words, wants us to believe that there is such a thing as an essence of femaleness, called feminity. Feminists, on the contrary...insist that though women
undoubtedly are female, this is no way guarantees that they will be feminine. This is equally true whether one defines femininity in the old patriarchal ways or in a new feminist way. Essentialism (the belief in a given female nature) in the end always plays into the hands of those who want women to conform to predefined patterns of femininity. In this context biologism is the belief that such an essence in biologically given. It is not essentialist however, to hold that there is a historically or socially given female essence.24

This authoritative and domineering male attitude has reduced Indu to a meek waitness awaiting a merger with the alter ego of male counterparts, and a personage suppressing her voice to be replaced by a certain dullness and repulsion.

Beside this fact Deshpande makes a strong statement on the arranged marriages too, which are outright discriminatory towards women. Atya in the novel tells Indu about Indu’s mother,

When he got married I was just like the rest sort. I didn’t like the idea because she wasn’t of our caste. Now... I don’t know. What difference did it make? She could have made him happy. Look at him now! Ever since he lost her, he’s been a wanderer. And with his brains he could have gone far. That’s why, Indu, when we heard you were getting married. I didn’t really mind that your husband didn’t belong to our community. I never said it to Akka but... (43)

It was because of the fear of Akka, who maintains the traditions of patriarchy strictly. The chains of traditional marriage are heavy and the escape routes are not available to a wife. Caught in the matrix of age-old custom or tradition, like the other Deshpande’s women characters she cannot break herself free from the clutches of tradition. The octopus of patriarchy engulfs every member of the family; yet in strange contrast to this, Akka’s reactionary, rebellious and matriarchal attitude way and iron rule ruined all the members of the house and reduced them to mere parasites because Akka believed only in surrender and submission Akka had, before her death, fixed the marriage of Indu’s cousin Padmini without
consulting the girl. She also earmarked a portion of her wealth for this purpose. Indu broods over the fate of women in large family and deeply resents the facts that in traditional joint Hindu families women are nothing more than puppets, without any identity voice or name. However, her revolutionary idealism, being unacceptable to the family, makes Padmini reject the tata of romance in her marriage, which by virtue of being an arranged one, is nothing beyond a pious and holy wedlock, as the destiny of the daughter had been shaped by her elders for her own good, for they had been possessed with a far sightedness that comes after seeing ups and downs of life.

The world represented in Roots And Shadows is a closed world of the joint family; the two major factors that are responsible for this narrow-mindedness are the caste-system and patriarchy; it has existed for such a long time that even the women have internalized; Akka, the family tyrant, is a product of patriarchy; so are the devious Sunanda, the proud Sumitra, the helpless Atya and Padmini. In the early formative years of the child, which are critical for later personality development, he or she is exposed to traditional patterns, which sharply define the male/female pattern of behaviour. It is indoctrined in the girl-child to play the role of a disciplined daughter, a meek and submissive wife and daughter-in-law and a sacrificing mother. The exaggerated importance given to the virginity of a girl is also greatly responsible for enforcing a restriction on her movements as soon as she reaches puberty.

The great expectation that marriage with Jayant would take Indu out of the ‘stone walls that do a prison make’ for her, provide her with an incentive, instinct and urge to struggle, so that she may create a brave new world for herself, where even the matriarchal tyranny of Akka will be no more to torment her; but she escapes from Scylla to fall into cheribedes. She does not heed the warning of Akka, who has no good opinion of inter-caste marriages, “Such marriage never work. Different castes, different languages...It’s all right for a while. Then they realise...”(18)

Being tied up in matrimonial bonds with Jayant, Indu comes to realise that it is because of him that sense and nonsense come together in
marriage. She wonders why she is trying to please him all the time; the androgynous rituals for husband’s longevity, as preached by female rituals appear ridiculous to her; the zenith of hypocrisy is that Jayant is flaunted by her, as she remarks:

We are rational, unprejudiced, broad-minded. We discuss. We discuss intelligently, even solemnly the problems of unemployment, pover, corruption and family planning. We scorn the currupt. We despise the ignorant, we hate the wicked—and our hearts bleed. Naran for Vietnam, for the blacks, for the Harijans—but frankly we don’t care a damn and one goddamn about anything but our own precious selves, our own precious walled-in-lives (25).

Though Indu’s education and exposure encourage her to break free from the clutches of tradition, she eventually finds that she is no different from the women who circumambulate the Tulsi plant and who believes that a woman’s good fortune lies in dying before her husband; the realisation comes to her that her condition is no better than that of her Janki and Atyas:

...Now good fortune means so many more things. But this above all that Jayant should be with me. Always, all the time, forever. So how am I different from you, Atya? From you and kaki and Sunanda-Atya and all the rest of you women to whom the greatest calamity is life without a husband? What difference does it make if our reason for thinking this way are different? (32-33).

In an era of transition, Indu becomes an emblem of a feminist psyche torn between traditional bondage and individual liberty; she is fully aware that these bonds are unreasonable and illogical, yet she wants to be bound by them as the typical traditional women. Although sometimes she becomes angry with meaningless tradition. For instance, the conversation with Sunanda Atya:

...Indu, I bet you say your husband’s name pat. Jayant? Of course, what else do you except me to call him? Akka will...
I mean, Akka would have had a fit if she had heard you say it like that, shows disrespect. She would have said. They also say it shortens your husband’s life. (32)

It is known to her that transgressing them will certainly rupture the family ties; she realize that it would be an act of wisdom to keep the traditional family ties without losing her individuality; the shaven-head of a widowed domestic maid servant reminds her how a widow had to remain shaven-head all the life after her husband’s death for fear of getting ostracized. Having seen all the meaningless orthodoxes in the family, Indu realises that her academic achievement economic independence and her independent attitude mean nothing to the woman of older generation, as their only aim in life was “to get married, to bear children, to have sons and then grandchildren”. (128)

The royal bed of Denmark becoming a couch of incest with Indu and her cousin Naren as the main actors, has been put to inquisition by the philosophical enquiry of the critics, who find something rotten in the state of Denmark on the author’s motivational grounds; her surrender that occurs twice in the novel is enough ground for branding her with the scarlet letter ‘A’ signifying ADULTRESS in an orthodox peninsular Indian society, which considers her a ‘tripled turned whore’ of Indo Anglian Fiction; at least the Indian patriarchy cannot approve of it, for according to Manu, a wife must ever remain devoted to her husband and always please him. While he is alive; after his death, she should never think of any other man; the irony is that while the widow is enjoyed to remain faithful to her husband’s memory, a husband, after having lost his wife, may marry again and again. Young modern women like Indu who leave behind the convention and take the initiative to join modernity are entangled as Maria Mies observes,

The non-conforming conduct of the women is not the consequences of an external necessity but of changed consciousness. They are not satisfied with the rhetoric of equality between man and woman but want to see that the right to an individual life and the right to development of their individual capabilities are realized in their own lives. 25
The author seems to have carved out the character of Indu to effectively depict her own reflections on the travails of a modern Indian woman passing through the contemporary transitional stage in the evolving social values. Sarabjit Sandhu succinctly summarises this aspect of the matter of the following words;

Deshpande has very exquisitely pinpointed the inner struggle and suffering of the new class of Indian women through the characters of Indu who has raised many basic questions regarding modern women who are rooted and shaped by the Indian customs but influenced by the scientific knowledge of the west.26

The novel expounds the indelible mark carved on the psyche of women by the conventions and norms established by the society. These traits which have become the roots of feminity always cast their shadows in women’s life. Shashi Deshpande seems to suggest through Roots and Shadows that a change in the upbringing of a girl-child is required. Only then she would be liberated from the mores preserved for women since ages.

However, the above analysis, confined to two novels, is not the ad infinitum, for.

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all the Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.27

Shashi Deshpande adopts a compromising and mild role in That Long Silence, in which Jaya, the protagonist, though educated and modern, finds it difficult to break from the strangle hold of tradition; the novelist, however avoids the facile solution of laying the blame on men alone and tries to view the man-woman relationship objectively,

...both men and women, being products of their culture, find it difficult to outgrow the images and roles allotted to them by society.' At least one stone from the walls of Patriarchal Bastille has been removed.28
That a man is made to enjoy the privilege of lustful assault, and a woman, though she is not born, becomes so, is destined to submit to the rapist tendency of men, is the theme of *The Binding Vina* as narrated by Urmil focussing her attention on the plights of Kalpana and Mira; by this passage of time the novelist has become bold enough,

‘to portray the agony of a wife who is the victim of marital rape—a theme which perhaps has not been touched upon by any other Indian writer in English.’

Such are the evils of the patriarchy, but the tale does not end, for, in the verisimilitude of Prospero’s narrative unfolded to Miranda, the stories written by Shashi Deshpande have the power to cure deafness and sleep; it is because she portrays therein ‘Woman’s struggle in the context of contemporary Indian society, to find and preserve her indentity as wife, mother and most important of all, as human being’.
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27 Edward Fitzgerald, Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, st. 51.
CHAPTER-I

THEME OF ENDORSEMENT OF PATRIARCHAL STRUCTURES