CHAPTER-IV

CRAFTSMANSHIP
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Technically speaking a small narrative space means authorial control for freedom of expression.

The language that women writers use in their narratives is of course an encoding of male privilege but it is also an oppressor’s language. It is also the voice of an invisible woman or silent woman without access to authoritative expression (Landy 16).

Deshpande strongly believes that language does not develop in a vacuum. It is rooted in a cultural content. Myths, memories, histories; proverbs and idioms are all a part of it as are sounds, syntax, allusions, and imagery. The concrete sensuousness of language is culturally influenced. She understands the need to balance language and culture. She has a personal view that if language in a narrative dominates, then the narrative becomes a message or a mere rhetorical device to make the text alien and distant. Even on the other side, if culture dominates in a narrative, it becomes a closed narrative. Deshpande is known for her lucid and simple narration. Her language is simple and elegant. She is known for writing a simple story depicting the struggle of the individuals to live in the society despite several forces suppressing their survival. Deshpande’s narratives bear the authenticity of woman’s signature. She has rejected the masculine dialect and the masculine perception of virtue, relationships and content.

Deshpande has a sharp psychological insight to examine the subtleties of human psyche and society aided by a richly evocative, unassuming and
pretentious style. Deshpande makes seldom use of irony, satire or humour in her novels. Flashes of irony, which are evident in some novels, are not included intentionally. Deshpande avoids the simple technique of straightforward narration and employs the flashback method to capture the interest of the reader. She manages to tell the story objectively.

The craftsmanship of her stories is worked out in detail. There is a quality both of subtlety and directness about them. The cultures, specifically of the Maharashtra – Karnataka region, can be clearly discerned in her descriptions and her language. This characteristic is a strength. As she does not use too many glosses, the nuances of language, the turn of a phrase, the description of a practice, bring out the specificity of her background. It imports a high degree of authenticity. It brings out the diversity of Indian culture. She is a regional writer.

Her detective novel Be Dead is a novel replete with literary allusions and direct references to Shakespeare, Dickens, Charlotte Bronte, Wilkie Collins, Chekhov, J.M. Synge, Harper Lee, Tagore and The Bible. In Be Dead by the side of Kshama, there is only one other full-fledged character, namely, her cousin, Devayani the rest such as her brother Pratap, her colleagues like Mrs. Jyoti Raman, her students like Sonali, her mother Mr. Matthews, the police officer and the doctor are at present secondary. Their presence and their movements gravitate around Kshama and the school and around the sordid goings on. Even Devayani serves as a foil to her cousin supplying a kind of domestic identity to her.

Terrors presents the inner drama of Saria. In this novel, the narration is introspective. It slides across the past and the present through effective shortcuts. Occasionally, Deshpande side-tracks into a list of philosophizing on human life,
grief, happiness, man's aloneness and so on. The novel is a bit too wordy. While considering *Silence*, William Walsh in *Indian Literature in English* says:

A turmoil of feeling is conveyed in cool, idiomatic and sensitive prose. And it is served by a memory, which is so rich and minutely specific and able to produce not just bright discrete images but rather a flow of naturally related scenes that it is a creative faculty making past life live again in the present. (117)

In *Silence*, the author's note and the use of the first person narrative and first person singular pronoun make the novel autobiographical in structure. It is rather expressive of an attempt at identification by the writer. The novel expands to become a mass — autobiography — of woman as a biologically homogeneous group. The narrative moves back to the past, forward to the time of narration and then back again to establish a link not only between women with blood ties but also with women as species. *Silence* is "a crystallization of memory and catharsis" (Singh, Anita 85). It is an autobiographical narrative of Jaya.

In *Silence*, the female 'I' in control of the narrative tries to ground the narrative in the realistic detail of everyday life and makes escape possible from the cultural expectations of the marriage plot. Joanna Frye in *Living Stories Telling Lives: Women and the Novel in Contemporary Experience* says:

By virtue of speaking as a woman, any female narrator-protagonist evokes some awareness of the disjunction between internal and external definitions and some recognition of her agency in self narration. To speak directly in a personal voice is to deny the
exclusive right of male authority implicit in a public voice and to escape the expression of dominant ideologies upon which an omniscient narrator demands. (51)

Besides, the stance of the ironist further helps to question the validity of a received structure. In Deshpande’s text, domestic monotony is not merely a state of boredom to the oppressiveness in the status quo. Jaya speaks of herself ironically as a “house proud woman” (LS 14). In fact “Ironic inversion of myths, subtle appropriation of traditional practice and the new poetics of feministically loaded metaphors create radically semiotic subtexts where the entire cultural patterning is inverted by radical rethinking” (Singh, Radical Feminism 102).

In the narrative of Silence, Jaya is an actor participant as well as an observer. She steps out of the narrative as a witness. Jaya desperately needs to protect herself from dissipating and sinking in the crumbling world around her. Deshpande presents the subterranean and subliminal impression of human life through digressions in the narrative.

In Silence, Jaya is not only a silent and mute sufferer. She is also an observer. She steps out of the narrative – action as a witness and as a critic to perceive the tenor of the story filtered through a female consciousness. It is basically her memory and reminiscence as she fails to react to the situation immediately. “The structural exposure of matrimony and wifehood in Terrors strengthens the authorial position into an ideology and reinforces it as a political appropriation of the narrative. The narrative alternates between the female ‘I’ and the Third person narration where two persons artistically merge into each other and the terror of shared agony of a dark life lived and put together bit by bit in
flashbacks haunt the Third person narrator who is making a lid to escape from it” (Singh, Radical Feminism). In fact, the readers are insinuated through the flashback technique used by Deshpande at every critical junctures in the psychic life of Jaya. Living lonely in her room, her mind shuttles between the past and the present. Deshpande “executes the stream – of – consciousness technique to project the reverberations of her characters in order to make the story more real and authentic” (Swain “Articulation of...” 90). Similarly, the first person narrative channelizes the flow of her agonized reminiscences. With her traditionally muted voice, she wobbles between the past and the present through her stream of thoughts. Through the close – ups and flashbacks, Deshpande reveals the hidden psyche of Jaya, which is reluctantly responsive and passively secluded. S.P. Swain in “Articulation of the Feminine Voice: Jaya in Shashi Desphande’s That Long Silence” says:

At once conversational and formal, the reminiscences of Jaya evoke a deeper and more tragic sense of vanished time, fleeting moments, personal losses recounted in a quite and calm voice characterized by sobriety. It follows the natural movements of a mind experiencing moments and expressions that become meaningful spots of time. Jaya’s unruffled stream of consciousness symbolizes the flow of mind that registers experience in a prose of recollection and nostalgia. (98)

In Silence, Jaya, acutely conscious of her image as a narrator–writer, unfolds her story in the first person narrative, relating her experiences from her inside to the outer world by giving them immediacy, urgency and impact. Her narration is
distanced in order to achieve authenticity and consequently value too. She makes it an objective account by distancing herself from her own self. Subash Chandra in “Silent No More: A Study of That Long Silence” says:

Ostensibly, she relates it as the story of a particular couple, but the power relations in the patriarchal structure, the gender differentiations with all its ramifications, and the typical travails of a woman struggling to define herself, take on the dimension of the condition and place of the Indian woman in society. (148)

In Vine, the narrative technique is the first person autobiographical one. Urmila, the heroine-narrator, is the pivot of the plot who connects all the threads in the plot—the stories of Mira, Shakutai and Kalpana, Vana and Harish, Kishore and Amrut, Inni and Akka, Aju and Baijii and the obscure figure of Mira’s husband and Bhaskar and Malcolm. It is Urmila’s agony at the death of Aru, which weaves all emotions and themes into unity. The central theme of the novel is the binding vine of feelings and emotions between parent and child and between husband and wife. It is love, which is the binding vine of life.

Remedies is told in Deshpande’s usual style of past and present interplay. It has a journey motif. Deshpande uses the stories of two women—Leela, the trade union activist and Savitribai Indorekar, the ageing diva of the Gwalior Ghamna. In it, she explores the theme of a woman set on a journey of self-discovery. The journey motif set in the narrative will relate past and present to provide answers to the puzzles raised in the course of the narrative. Madhu introduces these two women characters and becomes not only a passive story-teller but also a chronicler to write the biography of Savitribai Indorekar. In fact, by coming to
Bhavanipar, Madhu unravels the puzzle that is past, present, and future in order to understand the vagaries of time and suggest remedies.

Moving On uses memory, experience, and written texts, the diaries of a deceased father revealing the layered and entangled relationships in a filial drama. Manjari, commonly known as Jiji, the reader of her father's diaries, feels as if there is a message for her from her Baba who is dead. She feels that "the way he left them, displaying them to me almost, I knew that reading them would not be an intrusion" (Mo 18).

Time has several subnarratives woven into it, many of them which move into the past—Kalyani's life, Gopal's childhood; Romesh, Gopal's nephew's, relationship with Gopal whom he calls Guru; Romesh's parents, and their relationship with Gopal; Manorama, Kalyani's mother's marriage to Vithal—and the whole range of conspiratorial management behind the scenes. These subnarratives act as decentralizing factors with no individual protagonist being the sole concern of the story. Lives are interlinked and interdependent. The narrative is projected through a dominant consciousness. It is not a centralized, single voice. Space is the dominant concern in this novel. It is foregrounded because the novel opens with the description and the history of the house 'Vishwas'. It is the house which governs inheritance, marriage and family relationships. Later, Sumi's search for a house, the detailed description of the room in which Gopal lives, Sumi's dream about a house of her own in her new job, all reinforce the need for space and roots. In Shadows, Indu inherits Akka's house and has to take the painful decision to dispose of it, a decision which marks a dispersal of the family and a final freedom for Indu. Other houses also have a formidable
presence. Sarita comes back home to her parents' house in Terrors. Jaya takes a
look at her life in the Dadar flat in Silence. Madhu begins to feel at home in the
house at Bhavanipur.

Concerning the relevance of myth Deshpande says:

Myths continue to be a reference point for people in their daily
lives and we have so internalized them that they are part of our
psyche, part of our personal, religious and Indian identity. A Ram
or a Sita, a Krishna or an Arjuna, a Draupathi or a Savitri—these are
not just characters in stories to us; they are as real as the people
around us. (Writing From the Margin 88)

Madhumalathi Adikari in “Creating a Brave New World: Shashi Deshpande’s A
Matter of Time” says that in the case of Kalyani in Time that the “ethical
influence in women’s fiction can be better realized through a suggestive
manipulation of myths. Deshpande makes use of the myth of Kalyani, the
goddess Durga and Shripati, of Shri Narayana”(135). Further, Adikari says that
“Shripati is deprived of all Narayan like qualities” as he “is a mortal” (135). In
fact, Kalyani is empowered to destroy the demons in the society like Durga.
However, it is understood that Deshpande is simple, elegant and straight forward
in her writings. Her narrative is like a clear stream of consciousness.
REFERENCES


