CHAPTER-I
PERCEPTION OF THE IMAGE
OF MOTHER, DAUGHTER AND CAREER WOMAN
Chapter I

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Daughter and Career Woman

A husband and wife care for each other, live with each other until they are dead; parents care for their children, and children in turn look after their parents when they are needed; marriages never end, they cannot – they are a state of being.

(Silence 127)

Women writers focus on women characters, on women’s lives, and experiences in their writings. Women characters are visualized in terms of their relationship with men, while dealing with the problems of love, marriage and sex. Considering women’s problems, Deshpande in “Why I am a Feminist” says:

As for feminism forcing women to have careers, to be dissatisfied with being housewives, to desert husbands and families and rush for a divorce at the smallest pretext, is not just absurd; it is a great injustice to all the activists in this country, who, it sometimes seems, are the only people who care about dowry / rape / desertion / cruelty / slander victims. (Writing from the Margin 84)

Women also play their role as daughters, wives, mothers, career women and so on. Rosemarie Tong observes that “sometimes women play their roles not so much because they want to, as because they have to in-order-to survive economically and / or psychologically. Virtually all women engage in the feminine role playing” (208). The mother-daughter relationship has always
occupied an important place in Deshpande’s novels. She has not valourised the
image of mother as goddess. She has rendered more human qualities to such an
image.

In Deshpande’s novels, mothers are not the matriarchs to be glorified. They are the
suffocative and authoritative figures to be disdained. Adrienne Rich in Of Woman Born raised the question of woman’s autonomy regarding the
depiction of woman’s experience. She has emphasised that though the experience
of motherhood is the experience of woman yet the institution of motherhood is
controlled by man and this physical quality conditions her entire life (45). Often
one can find that when the protagonist herself is portrayed as a writer, Deshpande
infuses her own ‘writer’s credo’ into these heroines.

The image of subdued and suffering women holds the fancy of Indian men. The images of woman as the mother-protector, the inspirer and the
motivating force, as the object of desire, weakling and dependent on man tends to
magnify men’s stature by contrast. This cultural colonization which is the result
of biologism and sexism retards the mental, emotional and intellectual growth of
Indian women and strangles their efforts at selfhood. Subha Dwivedi in “‘To Be
or Not to Be’ : The Question of Professional Women in Shashi Deshpande’s The
Dark Holds No Terrors, Roots and Shadows and Small Remedies” says :

In order to overcome their self-alienation and subjugation by
misogynic prejudices, Deshpande’s women work against ‘numeric
monolithic systems’. She explicates multiple differences, multiple
desires utilizing personal narratives and lived experiences of her
heroines. Multiple voices in her novels explore the burden of
private history. Her novels have a thematic framework which studies the interface between women’s silence and their speech, their cultural evasive and resistance. (229)

Deshpande’s working women are both subjects of victimization and agents of change. They are not only passive victims of an oppressed ideology but also active agents of their own positive constructs. They also seem to be bound within the traditional roles of caring, curing and nurturing. For these women, profession gives a therapeutic effect on their lives and sensibilities. But the identity of women is jeopardized by their husbands inside the “enclosure in patriarchy” (Pratt 38).

In Deshpande’s novels, mother-daughter relationships are perpetually under question. In Terrors, Time, Vine and Remedies the conventional idea of motherhood is subjected to scrutiny. Part of the problem arises with a mother’s love for a male child as in Terrors, and part in the conflict between the need to be independent and free vis-à-vis the totalizing claims of motherhood. Also in some measure, it comes to rest on the mother-daughter relationship where domineering mothers destroy their daughters. Through this mother-daughter relationship, the woman to woman relationship is problematised across generations. It is a complex, protective, empathizing relationship. In Shadows, the mother of Indu dies giving birth to her daughter. The mother of Sarita in Terrors is a disgusted woman even before Sarita’s narrative begins.

Images of mothers, for many women writers, are sharply divided. Being a mother is often described very differently from having a mother. Julia Kristeva while talking about the conflicts of the daughter with her mother says that the
conflict leads to “the slow, difficult, and delightful apprenticeship in at
"gentleness, forgetting oneself. The ability to succeed in this path without 
masochism and without annihilating one’s affective, intellectual, and professional 
personality – such would seem to be the stakes to be won through guiltless 
maternity” (8). But Deshpande takes a much less utopian view, romanticizing 
neither having a mother nor being one: “how easy it is to cut the umbilical cord 
and separate the baby from the mother?” (DHT 34)

In Terrors Sarita’s mother is a domineering woman in a traditional set up. 
“The power” that Sarita’s mother exercises is the power of one who has accepted 
the ascribed role which provides the certainty and security of tradition. The power 
over the domestic domain is different from that of Akka’s who had enjoyed authority in the family because of her family and money” (Atrey 74). She has taken her role of wife and mother as the ultimate goal of her life. Sarita’s mother also had an unhappy childhood like Akka. Sarita’s maternal grandmother, the mother of Sarita’s mother, had been deserted by her husband and as a result Sarita’s mother had a bad childhood as she had to be sheltered by Sarita’s mother’s parents. It had affected her adolescent life. She had grown into a silent, and dour woman. This sort of the feeling of insecurity and unwantedness perhaps made her seek power to wield over others. She had been conditioned to regard a girl child as a burden; hence, her domineering treatment of Sarita. In fact, Sarita’s mother has assumed the image of a total and perfect Indian woman.

Deshpande makes use of re-visioning traditional myths. In Terrors, Sarita 
is unaware of her split self. Sarita as a child visited the temple of Goddess Devi 
with her mother and had seen a woman gyrating in front of the Goddess Devi as
the woman was possessed by the spirit of the Goddess. Later, Sarita comes to
know that she is also possessed of a split self—a self possessed by her mother's
spirit with whom she has a love-hate relationship.

Life becomes most desperate to Sarita after Dhruva’s death. Sarita’s mind
is filled with deep and indelible scars as her mother constantly pines for her dead
son and rejects even the presence of her daughter. At every opportunity, her
mother snubs her. This sense of rejection by her mother torments the adolescent
psyche of Sarita. Even Sarita’s hatred intensifies when she attains puberty. She
resents the onset of her womanhood. Thus, she gains psychological insecurity and
becomes prone to constant and recurring dreaming. She hates her, hurts her,
wounds her and makes her suffer.

Sarita’s mother has totally rejected her. In a casual unconcerned manner
the mother says: “Daughter? I don’t have any daughter. I had a son and he died.
Now I am childless... I will pray to God for her unhappiness. Let her know more
sorrow than she has given me” (DHT 178). Mother erased Sarita from her
household. The refusal to see the doctor daughter even while dying of cancer
reiterates the idea of total rejection. Sarita’s obsessive remembrance of the
mother is indicative of both her sense of guilt and her sense of defeat. Dead or
alive, Sarita sees the mother sapping her of all happiness. She asks: “Why should
she matter dead when she had never mattered alive?” (DHT 23).

Sarita has a love for power. This love for power can be identified with her
relationship with every character in the novel. With the natural love for power she
views her mother as a rival. Her mother always appears to be dominating and
oppressive and poses a threat to her individuality, autonomy, and self will. The
power that her mother exudes makes her rebel against her. Premila Paul in “The Dark Holds No Terrors : A Call for Confrontation” avers : “The archetypal Terrible Mother sees Saru only as a burden to be eased, a problem to be solved, a responsibility to be dispensed with and a person who has no right to any choice in life” (35 also in “A Woman’s Search” 66). In Saru, the hatred over her mother is deep-rooted. She cries : “A kind of shame that engulfed me, making me want to rage, to scream against the fact that put me in the same class as my mother… If you’re a woman, I don’t want to be one” (DHT 55). In fact, Sarita sees the negative qualities in her mother.

In Terrors, the mother-daughter relationship is based on gender-bias and lovelessness. Sarita, is deprived of parental care and affection. Her mother hates her and prefers to favour her son, Dhruva. This creates a rift between the mother and daughter and forces Sarita to tread on the path of rebellion. In fact, in Terrors, Sarita’s brother, Dhruva is the fundamental factor of her mother’s existence. On the other hand, Sarita is the responsibility to be fulfilled. After Dhruva’s death, Sarita is accused of killing him. Her mother lashes at her: “Why you are alive, when he is dead” (DHT 191). The intensity of hatred is overpowering. Her mother disowns her and dies unforgiving.

In Shadows, Akka is hated by Indu. Indu’s rebellion is quite clear when she marries Jayant much against Akka’s order. Indu leaves home “full of hatred for the family, for Akka specially” (RS 18). Sarita in Terrors grows up a victim of her mother’s sexist and gender biased roles. Even as a child she remembers her mother’s preference for Dhruva. She is constantly reminded that she is a girl whose destiny is to get married and leave the house, while her brother need not do
so. Her mother shows sexist / gender difference in her treatment of her son, Dhruva, and Saru. Saru records her conversation with her mother:

"Don’t go out in the sun. You’ll get darker".

"Who cares?"

"We have to care if 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 is different. He’s a boy." (DHT 40)

The words ‘he’s a boy’ establishes the image of a traditional mother in Sarita’s mother against which Sarita has to rebel.

The process of preparing the girl towards her ‘otherness’ begins in early childhood. It is intensified from the moment she attains puberty. She is made to feel conscious about revealing her femininity to the male members of the family. A girl child is instructed. “You should be careful now about how you behave. Don’t come out in your petticoat like that” (DHT 55). In Silence, Jaya is also told that “a husband is like a sheltering tree” (LS 137) and that “the happiness of your husband and home depends entirely on you” (LS 138). Sarita hates herself as the knowledge of womanhood is blatantly and obtrusively thrust on her.

In Shadows, Deshpande treats the girl-child problem based on three main female characters and their girlhood-Mini, Akka and Indu. Mini inculcates in her
all the traditional feminine qualities since her childhood. In fact, Mini’s obedience, silence and submission makes her obey the rules and regulations set by the family for girls as she is brought up under strict supervision, guidance, and restrictions. The novelist makes Indu recall Mini: “Mini had always been very much of a girl was expected to be, helping the women with small odd chores” (RS 122). Indu contemplates on the existence of inner strength in the women of her family. Mini too accepts that the life of a girl child is devoid of choices. Indu admits:

A woman’s life, they had told me, contained no choices. And all my life, specially in this house, I had seen the truth of this. The women had no choices but to submit, to accept [...] And yet Mini, who had had no choice either, had accepted the reality, the finality with a grace and composure that spoke eloquently of that inner strength. (RS 6)

Right from her childhood, Indu has been seeing the secondary place assigned to woman in the family so that even a simple thing like sending a cup of tea for her to the room is seen a breach of etiquette.

In Shadows, right from the childhood, Indu has seen that women occupy only a secondary role. As a child she has been told to be obedient and unquestioning. She is expected to be weak and submissive. She has to accept everything, even defeat, gracefully. Her intelligence will be a burden to her as women are not supposed to think rationally. Indu has resented all this suppression. Indu refuses to be a mother of child. She even realises that “nothing about me... my academic distinctions, my career, my success, my money [...] To
her I was just a childless woman. To get married, to bear children, to have sons and then grandchildren. They were still for them only successes a woman could have" (RS 116).

Akka in Shadows is portrayed as a traditional woman through Indu’s point of view. Indu describes Akka as “ruthless, bigoted, dominating and inconsiderate” (RS 24) and also as a “malicious, trouble-loving, trouble-creating, old woman” (RS 103). To Indu, Akka is a role model. Akka suffered from her early marriage. Akka’s traumatic girlhood is an example of her tragic sequences of child-marriages in India. At a tender age, she had to submit herself to sexual violence and abuses. She regarded sex as punishment for a girl. Even before she is out of her teens, Akka became pregnant. She was not able to give birth to a living child in her teenage. She was branded inauspicious and evil because of her childlessness. Akka also turned to be a dutiful wife after the death of her mother-in-law and her husband’s paralytic stroke. She could not desert her paralysed husband despite his long abuse of her tender body. But she was successful in retaining her integrity, name and fame after the death of her husband as she has inherited her husband’s wealth. Despite her sex, because of her money and because of the weak dependent and ineffectual men in the family she became a domineering woman.

In Silence, there is hardly any communication between Jaya and Mohan, neither verbal nor emotional. There is nothing between them but suppressed silence. Jaya wants to flee from the confines of an incarcerated domestic life in order to find a new identity for herself. She ruminates: “Nothing between us... nothing between me and Mohan. We live together but there had been only
emptiness between us" (LS 185). Their silence is a disheartening one. Jaya is unable to speak her troubles and Mohan's queries remain unanswered by Jaya. It is as Ram Sharma in "Writing from the Margins: A Study of Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence" observes:

Hindu womanhood where obedience and loyalty have degenerated to the state of dogged subservience and a modern woman nestled in tradition like Jaya understands a traditionalist like Mohan who is rooted out and out in customs and whose repressive use of silence makes Jaya into conformity with his expectations. Deshpande presents here not a woman who has a desire to revolt but the one who ultimately reconciles to her hapless lot. Having failed to discover the truth, she remains silent and reticent revealing her most personal and private thoughts in her writings. Mohan wonders as to how could women be so rebellious and esoteric, so angry and recalcitrant. To him, it is unwomanly to be angry for it is against the ideals of feminism. (90)

With Jaya in Silence, the bitterness of her relationship with her mother becomes deeply ingrained in her and is linked to her relationship with her children. She feels that children are "sacred creatures, our justification for everything, even for living. Everything we did, or didn't, was of the children. No wonder, it occurs to me now, that they grow up to be such sullen monsters, burdened with all this unselfishness of ours" (LS 19-20). Jaya loses confidence in her own self as a mother when she realises that her children do not crave for her love and warmth.
Regarding the role of silence in Silence, Rupalee Burke in “The Search for a Voice: A Study of Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence” says:

Although as a child was born into an above average household, she had developed the fear of speech for fear of ridicule from males beginning with Appa, her father, who had snobbishly criticized her poor taste in music, saying “What poor taste you have, Jaya”. Jaya, not able to erase Appa's reproach for 'poor taste', lapses into silence even later so that she avoids confessing to Mohan that she actually enjoys the ads in the movies more than the movies. The inability to find words leads Jaya to embark upon a long silent journey. The repeated references to silence as 'we were silent' (19), 'So many subjects were barred that the silence seemed heavy with uneasiness' (27), 'We went back to our silence' (28), 'the utter silence' (35), 'But the words remained unsaid. I knew his mood was best met with silence' (78), 'But I said nothing. It was so much simpler to say nothing. So much less complicated' (99), 'but as if I'd been struck dumb, I could say nothing' (121) indicate Jaya's silence, but mostly a mutual silence, particularly between herself and Mohan. Jaya had endured such agony mutely though not passively because of her traditional upbringing and conditioning to look upon the husband as God. Jaya's is yet another sacrifice on the altar of marriage. (64)

Jaya finds fault with her mother for not preparing her well for the duties of a woman's life. Jaya attributes her failure as a mother to her own mother's neglect
of her. She even reflects and finds that besides being a failure as a mother she has not been a good wife either. Jaya betrays suppressed resentment and patriarchy towards her mother. Jaya resents her sexist bias. She sees her mother unable to live up to the ideal role of the perfect mother.

The conflict between Urmila and her mother Inni, in Vine is direct and frontal. Urmila shows hostility towards her mother in her harsh and angry tones. She also uses harsh languages. As a child, Urmila had been sent away to Ranidurg to be raised by her grandparents. Urmila had taken it as her mother's act of rejecting her child. It nursed deep resentment and anger against her. "Her behaviour towards her mother veers from the unassertive (she is hurt and sulky) to the aggressive (she is angry and self righteones), but not the assertive (where she can communicate openly and fearlessly with her mother)" (Atrey 77).

In Remedies motherhood gives Madhu a new sense of worth, happiness, identity and so on. She recalls "Motherhood takes over my life, it makes me over into an entirely different person [....] It's my baby's dependence that changes me; my place in the universe is marked now" (SR 183). Adit becomes the centre of her universe and all the time she has been thinking over the welfare of her son, Adit.

Savitri Bai comes from an affluent Brahmin family. She is initiated into the world of music by her mother. Even after her marriage and giving birth to a child, Savitri walks out of her marital house with her tabla player, Ghulam. Later, by their relationship they have a child, Munni, who seems to be alienated in the childhood because of her parents' unusual relationship. In order to belong to the society Munni believes that her father is Savitri Bai's husband and not Ghulam.
She disowns her father. Later, apart from her father, Munni's relationship with her mother is also unusual. Munni is unloved and uncared by Savitri. Hence, Munni develops contempt and hatred for her mother and detests everything about her. To her, Savitri is disgrace. Munni seeks an identity as an ordinary woman belonging to a respectable family.

In Vine, there are several mother-daughter relationships – Inni and Urmi, Urmi and Aru, Akka and Vanna, Vanna and her two daughters, even Mira's relationship with her mother. There is also a relationship between Priti and her mother.

In Moving On there is a strained relationship between mother and daughter. The mother of Jiji, Bai, is from an orthodox family and she wants her daughter, Jiji, to follow orthodoxical ways. It is really a conflict between tradition and modernity. When Jiji decides to marry Shyam, she says: “One day, when you have children of your own, you will know how children can break your heart. And then you will think of me, of what you are doing to me” (MO 206). In Moving On, Baba and Mai are not compatible. They are alienated even though they belong to traditional society. This is seen by reading the diary of Baba by Jiji.

Deshpande's career women are smothered by their husbands. In Terrors Sarita is happy with Manohar though they live in her dingy one-room apartment. Manohar has been the breadwinner. They have peace in the family but problem begins to creep in the moment when Sarita is recognized as a doctor. When Sarita becomes a successful doctor and earns a lot, Manohar's behaviour begins to change. Manohar's ego is hurt by her success. He feels inferior and this feeling
of inferiority makes him brutal in his behaviour. Though he is normal by day, he turns a treacherous rapist at night and tries to assert his masculinity through sexual assault on Sarita. Like Jaya, Sarita wants to give up her profession as a doctor in order to satisfy her husband but Manohar disapproves of Sarita's idea of leaving her job. "Saru a professional woman dislocates the binary of husband as 'provider and protector' versus wife as 'recipient and protected" (Dwivedi 234). The story of Sarita clearly depicts a duality in the psyche of Indian society. Women are expected to be both modern and traditional to man like Manohar. Shubha Tiwari in "The Heroine in The Dark Holds No Terrors by Shashi Deshpande" says "Saru a woman is broken mentally. She is a pessimist to the care. She hates touch. She abhors men, each one of them. She is haunted by the traumatic experience" (88). Sarita's personality is continuously evaded. Her life lacks an anchor. She is a homeless refugee. She is lost. She is rejected by her mother. She is perplexed as she cannot understand her mother and her husband. Her psychological as well as physical trauma creates and fosters several psychological knots. "For the world, she is a confidant and competent doctor and in reality she is a scared, tortured woman" (Tiwari "The Heroine in" 90). Sarita passes under four phases namely : flight from reality; frustration; submission; and ultimately an attempt to reconsolidate.

Indu's ambition for developing a career in writing is shared by Jaya, in Silence. The four part novel is about Jaya's questioning of herself and her relationship with her husband, Mohan, who in order to escape from the restrictive life of poverty moves from modest aspirations to still higher ones. In this process of social climbing, he gets involved in some shady deals. In order to become unavailable for sometime Mohan and Jaya move into an old flat which Jaya had
inherited. This forced retreat into the past, into the chawl-like flat lets loose all past ghosts, memories, and claims of relationships. The past as it unfolds itself carries images of large families, endless pregnancies and endless deprivation, the constant and brutal use of a woman's body and death in waiting as both the fertile and the barren women die. Male insensitivity and brutality, with men showering all their frustration on the women also become evident. Within this chaotic existence, the one stable factor is a woman's wifehood which is considered a necessary sanctuary and a blessing camouflaging within it all its hidden miseries, conflicts and the uncomplaining burden which women carry. As Jaya goes over the past, she realises in how many different ways Mohan has pushed her and appropriated her space and her relationships. He has limited her, inhibiting even the free expression of her natural generosity and fellow-feeling. The male bulldozes over a woman's personal claims and sensitivities.

To Jaya, writing is a process of self-revelation. In the earlier part, her writing career is a failure as her stories lack genuine feelings. It is because she has remained self-alienated. In the earlier part, Jaya thinks that her writing career and an artistic zeal free her from all domestic and societal roles which cramped and dubbed her psyche. In the end, she resolves to put all her endurance on paper and particularly about seventeen years silence—the long silence that has reduced her psyche into fragments.

Towards the end of the novel Jaya consciously acknowledges her writing as a kind of fiction and quotes Defoe's description of fiction as a kind of 'lying' which many make 'a great hope in the heart'. Hence she decides to 'plug that hole' as said earlier by
speaking and listening and erasing the silence between her and Mohan. It is this erasing of the silence that symbolizes the assertion of her feminine voice, a voice with hope and promise, a voice that articulate (sic) her thoughts. (Sharma, “Writing from the” 92-93)

Jaya unfurls and unburdens herself to activate the creative impulses smothered within her artistic self. The act of unburdening through the creative process becomes a means of reliving of the past but in the process of self-revelation through writing, Jaya comes to recognize herself as a failed writer. She comes to accept herself as a failed writer.

Jaya is capable of making someone a scapegoat for her failures. She finds fault with her husband for the failure as a writer. At one stage, she tells her husband that she gave up writing because of him. She says:

I had known then that it hadn’t mattered to Mohan that I had written a good story, a story about a couple, a man who could not reach out to his wife except through her body. For Mohan, it had mattered that people might think the couple was us, that the man him. To Mohan I had been no writer, only an exhibitionist. (LS 144)

In fact, Jaya does not want to hurt Mohan by continuing her writing. She thinks that her writing career may break the marital harmony. She admits: “he had shown me his hurt” and “I had been saved by hurting Mohan, scared of jeopardizing the only career I had” (LS 144). In fact, Deshpande uses an apt
image of worm clothing into a hole to describe the state of Jaya, a budding writer fading into a typical Indian housewife.

Jaya had given up her ambitions of becoming a writer. Along with the mythical role models before her, "Sita following her husband into exile, Savitri dogging Death to reclaim her husband, Draupadi stoically sharing her husband's travails ..." (LS 11) she keeps on continuing sharing her thoughts in her mind: "Remember, Jaya a husband is a sheltering tree" (LS 32). Even Kumkum is given respect only due to the husband. Jeeja rebukes Jaya by saying: "Stop that! Don't forget, he keeps the Kumkum of your forehead. What is a woman without that?" (LS 53). Even Jaya's memory of her mother-in-law's photograph reminds her that her mother-in-law is a "blessed woman who died with her husband yet living" (LS 38).

Jaya's part-time career as a writer ceases to be and as a result she becomes a full-time attendant to Mohan as she states in unequal terms that Mohan is "her profession, career and means of livelihood" (LS 75). Mittapalli Rajeshwar in "The Trauma of a House-Wife; Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence" says that "she like Gandhari of the Mahabharata symbolically bandages her eyes and grows blind to his weaknesses. Like Sita who followed her husband into exile, she follows Mohan into the concrete jungle that is Bombay [...]" (70). The depiction of Jaya's oppressed and unsatisfactory life makes her "incessantly ravelled by inner conflict, given to copious weeping, constantly analysing her oppressed lot in a male oriented society" (Walsh 1990, 117). Jaya is affected by the idea of being a non-entity, of the irrationality of existence with the sense of excitement, fear and nausea. She experiences a sense of anguish, a generalized uneasiness, a fear or
dread. She is made to realize that “all existence is merely contingent, without any necessity to exist, without any rationality, any essence simply in the way, superfluous, *de trop*, and so it is absurd” (Lavine 346).

Indu, as a creative writer and working in a magazine, loses her identity and enthusiasm to write on being forced by the editor to suppress facts and present a glossy picture to the readers. She is even more hurt when her husband, instead of supporting her, asks her to compromise and commands her not to resign the job saying: “That’s life! What can one person do against the whole system! [...] we need the money, don’t we?” (RS 17).

Indu exercises her potential self by asserting herself as an individual. She pushes aside all her fears and doubts about herself. She continues to maintain her individuality. In fact, Indu’s predicament is the larger predicament of every woman of contemporary Indian society. Indu represents any woman placed in transitional period who is torn between age-old traditions and individual views.

Indu wants to prove that she is an individual “Her fighting, aggressive and asserting nature makes her realize that until and unless the roots which stands for patriarchy and conservative outlook is eradicated, she cannot obtain fulfilment. Therefore, she makes up her mind to destroy the roots, strives to gain her solidity with courage” (Prasad, “Gender Discrimination” 9). Indu plays the role of an ideal housewife but that restricts, rather circumscribes, her self-development—firstly, by taking away her freedom of thought and expression and secondly, by denying her the scope of giving free play to her artistic potential. G.D. Barche in "Indu : Another Sisyphus in Roots and Shadows" says :
Indu, the central character in *Roots and Shadows*, shares the fate of Sisyphus. Her crime is the revelation of long hidden inner world of women in general and Indian woman in particular. She is suffering in our world and her suffering is deeper and deadlier than Sisyphus's as he was to roll up only one stone; while she is rolling up many, viz., the ideal of independence and completeness, the concept of self, sin, love, the ideal of detachment and freedom, and so on. (111)

In fact, Indu started hating and fighting against the womanhood since the day she was made aware of her being a woman by the elder women in the family. The thrusting - upon attitude by the society in general and the family in particular has made her more rebellious and aggressive. She looks at each situation from the same angle. Even at the idea of love which she herself initiates, she starts doubting: "I had for some time loved Jayant. But between the idea and the reality there is an immeasurable distance" (RS 91). She, in fact, feels marriage as "A trap? Or a cage?" (RS 67). Indu struggles hard to understand the life in reality. She is not able to understand the real cause which is destroying her married life. She feels that her sense of certainty, confidence and assurance is destroyed in the presence of her husband, Jayant. Jayant never bothers to understand what she wants and what her feelings are. There is no real communication between them. They have only an imposed silence. Sarbjit K. Sandhu in *The Image of Woman in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande* says: "Indu is projected against the women belonging to the older generation. Thus, the writer has very artistically juxtaposed two sets of women in the Indian set up. One set is represented by Akka, Narmada,
Sumitra Kaki, Kamla Kaki, Atya, Sunanda Atya; and the other set is represented by Indu” (28).

In Indu’s life, Jayant betrays her hopes for harmony and integration. Indu’s interest in creative writing is stopped by Jayant as Jayant sees her interest in creative writing as a means of articulating her feminine voice. Indu finds that she has relinquished her identity by surrendering before Jayant’s masculinity by becoming his wife. But she never blames him as she exists and does not exist. She does not believe in mothering. S.P. Swain in “Roots and Shadows: Feminist Study” affirms: “Indu plays the role of an ideal housewife but the role of a wife restricts, rather circumscribes her self-development – firstly, by taking away her freedom of thought and expression, and secondly, by denying her the scope of giving free play to her artistic potential” (91). It is as Rosemarie Tong observes: “Sometimes women play their roles not so much because they want to, as because they have to in order to survive economically and/or psychologically—virtually all women engage in the feminine role playing” (208). Indu admits this to Naren: “As a woman I felt hedged in by my sex. I resented my womanhood because it closed so many doors to me” (RS 87). “It is because as members of the subordinate sex, women are characterized by obedience and submission and under male dominance they have to develop a tendency to prevail by passive means” (Klein 167).

Indu analyses the ideal of detachment and freedom and tries to achieve these. She tries to listen to the voice of her own conscience and in silent revolts. Indu is also highly sensitive to the situations. She aspires to become independent and complete in herself. She finds dominant Akka and her family to be a great
hindrance to achieve her goal of attaining independence and completeness.
P. Ramamoorthi in "Myself is My Own: A Study of Deshpande's Women" says:
"Indu [...] learns that the truth about herself dismissing all the shadows that she
had thought to be her real self" (39). She understands that she is a writer. She
admits: "I would at last do the kind of writing I had always dreamt of doing" (RS
205). It is an assertion of her will and self. It is as Beauvoir in The Second Sex
asserts: "The more women assert themselves as human beings, the more the
marvelous quality of the 'other' will die in them" (173).

In Vine, Urmi comes across a photograph of her mother-in-law, Mira,
which is introduced as "Kishore's mother, Karthika's grandmother" (BV 42). The
trunk from which she gets the photograph contains many books and diaries of
Mira. The poems of Mira are in Kannada and the diaries in English. After
reading the poems, Urmi realises the sufferings of Mira, the "woman who wrote
those poems in the solitude of an unhappy marriage, who died giving birth to her
son at twenty two" (BV 48). In the eyes of Urmi, Mira's diary "is not a daily
account of her routine life but a communion with herself" (BV 51). Urmi
visualizes when and where Mira could have written these poems. Urmi says: "I
can see her stealthily, soundlessly getting out of bed, sitting down on the floor by
the window perhaps, forgetting everything while she writes" (BV 127). Mira's
diary also reveals her meeting with the rising poet Venu. When Mira asked Venu
about some of her poems, Venu said, "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" (BV 127). It is a sheer brutality because she
thinks "even to force your will upon another is to be brutal" (BV 133). This
reflects the agony of a creative woman in an androgenic world. This is
subordination by domestication. The silent effort of Mira to use language as a tool of communication not to others but to herself in total silence is "a demand for access to and parity within the law and myth-making groups in societies" (Kaplan 71). It deprives woman of imagination and the power of communication. Cora Kaplan in Sea Changes : 'Culture and Feminism avers:

To be a woman and a poet presents many women poets with such a profound split between their social, sexual identity (their human identity) and their artistic practice that the split becomes the insistent subject, sometimes overt, often hidden or displaced, of much woman's poetry. (70)

Urmi's effort to publish the poems of Mira is an effort to negate a culture in which such feminist dreams have been replaced by fundamental patriarchy that divides women into rigid categories based on function. The effort of Urmi to publish Mira's poems may be taken as an effort to discover the strangled and stifled voice of a woman to articulate woman's silent discourses by deciphering the code and liberating the chained and covered imagination of a woman from interior into exterior. In fact, Deshpande makes a silent or muted woman to be a talking woman by erasing the silence.

In Time, Sumi revives her creativity and enters the world of creative writing. Her first play "The Gardener's Son" is a success. This gives her the moral courage to handle themes like female sexuality. She decides to write a story with Surpanakha, the demon sister of King Ravana. Sumi establishes her identity and finds a meaningful existence. From the viewpoint of Surpanakha, she wants to express her emotions:
Female sexuality we’re ashamed of owing it, we can’t speak of it, not even to ourselves. But Surpnakha was not, she spoke of her desires, she flaunted them. And therefore, were the men unused to such women frightened? Did they feel threatened by her? I think so. Surpnakha neither ugly nor hideous but a woman charged with sexuality, nor frightened of displaying it, it is this Surpnakha. I’m going to write about. (MT 191)

Sumi shows progressive outlook. She wants to assert her individuality in the male-dominated world. She leads an independent life. The above revision of the Surpanakha episode speaks of Sumi’s eagerness to place man-woman relationships on sound, non-partisan footing and also of her modernity in thought. It is a pity that Sumi dies of an accident suddenly, just before her taking up a job to support herself and her daughters.

Like Leela and Savitribai Indorekar, the story-teller and the chronicler, Madhu is also on a journey. Chandra Holm in “Potent Remedies : Themes and Techniques in Shashi Deshpande’s Small Remedies” says:

During the course of this journey, we witness various stages of Madhu’s life : as the motherless daughter of a successful doctor in Neemgaon, her friendship at that time with Munni, Savitribai’s daughter, her big-eyed worship of Savitribai and Ghulam Ahmed, her moving to Bombay to Leela and Joe’s place when her father dies, the beginning of her love for English literature due to Joe’s influence, Tony’s becoming her brother ‘with a determination that was much at variance with his usual lackadaisical attitude’ (203),
her job as the assistant editor of City News, her friendship with 
Tony’s friends Chandru and Som, her marriage to Som [...] and 
finally the rift between the couple and the death of Adit. (58-59)

In Remedies, Deshpande creates Savithri Indorekar a woman of substance and 
attitude. She belongs to a Gwalior ghanna and to tradition and other orthodox 
practices but she elopes with Gulam Saab, her Muslim tabla accompanist. She 
gives birth to Munni but as Madhu wants to “make Bai the rebel who rejected the 
conventions of her time” (SR 166) she pours contempt on prescriptive social 
behaviour of woman by rejecting motherhood and her wifeless status for the sake 
of singing career. She demonstrates that she has an indomitable will and resilient 
spirit. She courts obloquy but cultivates indifference towards society’s dictates.

Savitri Bai deserts her lover in pursuit of her singing career. Commenting 
on such a daring act, Madhu in her hagiography writes: “Victim stories are out of 
fashion, heroines are in. Heroinism – a word which falls oddly on my 
unaccustomed ears, a word devoid now of its earlier attributes of passivity and 
beauty is the word of the day” (SR 167). In Savitri Bai’s words, “now a days they 
become Ustads and Pandits even before they have proper moustaches” (SR 224). 
She finds a balance between her womanhood and her artistic inclination yet she 
remains remorseless towards every act of hers.

Madhu does not display her anti-traditional spirit as aggressively as the 
way Savitribai and Leela do. Instead, she finds catharsis in her writing. Her 
career with City News comes to an abrupt end when she becomes pregnant. 
Madhu claims. “Motherhood absorbs all of me, I’ve nothing left for anyone, for 
anything” (SR 146).
The relationship with one's parents is not necessarily of love or affection. It is often of resistance or evaluation. Sarita in Terrors constantly rebelling against her mother. She is always judging and critiquing her mother. Similarly, Urmi in Vine is unwilling to grant her mother the unquestioning affection of a daughter. In Terrors, Sarita's life goes off the rails primarily because her mother has tried too hard to mould her into a woman's role. She hates her mother. Indu in Shadows rejects Akka, the mother-surrogate. Jaya in Silence wages a relentless guerilla warfare against: Ai (Mother) and Ajji (grand-mother). Usha Bande in "Mother, Daughter and Daughter's Daughter-A Study of Shashi Deshpande" says:

In these three novels, Deshpande displaces the mother from the 'hallowed' altar of worship and installs her among us: not a deity, but a woman, living and facing the realities of existence. She is no longer the archetypal 'Terrible Mother' nor is she the magnanimous 'Mother Earth' like Bhattacharya's mother of Kajoli in So Many Hungers, feeding and caring for all. On the contrary, she is one of the erring humans, liable to be charged, impeached and discarded, in life as well as after death. She may be the formidable Akka of Indu or the ever-indicting Ai of Saru, she is powerless to hold the daughter and force her to toe her line. This displacement is significant from the point of view of the recent socio-cultural trends in Indian middle-class society. Socio-culturally, the Sati-Savitri-Sita myths of unquestioned obedience is shattered; children question their parents; girls fight for their rights.
There is a move toward self-consciousness, a demand for ‘feminist autonomy’. (135)

As Sarita, Jaya and Indu have rebelled against their mothers, so are their daughters. Jaya’s daughter Rati is a defiant young girl. When she is ordered to be quick in tasting / eating ice cream, she deliberately delays and seems to be shown allowing the ice cream to be melt. When Mohan, her father is angry, she slams the car door hard, sulkily. Jaya describes her as “a grave, serious, independent, understanding” (LS 173) girl. Som’s daughter, Renu, though a kid of nine, disturbs her mother by her weird imagination. Her paintings are lonely, cheerless and frightening. The girl seems to have no feelings, sensitivity, and makes her mother always “nervous, unsure and uncertain of herself” (DHT 33). Som describes her as a “cold, shrewd, objective observer” (DHT 33). A.G. Khan in “Shashi Deshpande’s Fiction : Prisoners by Choice?” says:

These women carry the burden of their overblown right from their early childhood. Whether they are reared as an ignored sibling or as a pampered child, they grow with complexes, overconscious of their superiority. If there is a doting father who showers affection, there is, inevitably, an antagonism with mother. In fact, The Dark Holds No Terrors and The Binding Vine abound in examples of such strained mother – daughter relationships – Kamala – Savitri – Renu (DT); Inni – Urmi / Vanaa – Mandira / Sakutai – Kalpana (BV). It is always the father who sides with and favours the daughter much to the mother’s despair and this pampering makes
the daughters feel that their mothers are ignorant, arrogant or jealous and therefore must be ignored. (199)

In *Terrors*, Sarita’s father helps her come out from the feeling that she has killed her brother Dhruva. He helps her come out of her split consciousness by highlighting the significance of the episode of Dhuryodhana’s hiding in Dvaipayana lake at the end of Krukshetra battle. He says:

> When the Kauravas are defeated and Duryodhana finds he is almost the only one of them left, he leaves the battlefield and goes into a lake. He waits there for the Pandavas to come and kill him... Your mother made me read that part a second time. And then she said, ‘yes, that’s what all of us have to face at the end? That we are alone. We have to be alone.’ (DHT 194)

Deshpande demythologizes the ideal of motherhood. The ideal of giving birth to a child is stripped of the usual romance and aura and portrayed in stark terms. The protagonists view the motherhood with trepidation and disgust. Indu does not want to have a child because of her insecure relationship with Jayant. Only Jaya and Urmila accept their role as mothers. Jaya is uneasy when she aborts a third, unwanted child. Urmila is shattered when she loses her girl baby. Indu and Sarita show a total negative attitude to motherhood. It is a consequence of the trauma that they had undergone at the onset of puberty. Indu had been crudely told that she could have babies now. She found it hard to accept it then. She associated it with menstruation and childbirth as uncleanliness. Sarita has also undergone the same anxiety during her initiation into womanhood. As an adolescent, she wanted to reject her femininity because she used to associate it with her mother whom she
would not accept as a role model. In fact, the mother figures are taken as agents of oppressive patriarchal society as Sarita feels. W.J. Kottiswari in "Postmodern Feminist Writers: A Study of Selected Works of Shashi Deshpande and Githa Haran..." says:

The two other stories used as intertexts in the novel are that of Dhruva in the Sankrit epic *Srimadbhagavathamahapuranam* and that of Duryodhana in *Mahabharata*. This is done precisely to highlight the patriarchal nature of the myths by blending it with a story that charts the self-discovery of a woman and not a man. Here Sarita is the rejected child who is the butt of her mother's anger since she wrongly thinks that Sarita is responsible for her brother's (who is also named Dhruva) accidental death by drowning. Duryodhana is another mythical character who is sidelined by his cousin brothers, the Pandavas. (213)

Deshpande's mothers are old women. They have motherly affection but they hide it in a convincing manner. Sarita's mother takes her tenderly to the temple, to the traditional *Haldi-Kumkum* programmes, presents her gold ear-rings and so on. Only when their daughters question the validity of old and traditional ideals and wish to break away from them and their household the mothers react. The idea of rebellion is not palatable to them because they themselves have never heard of a girl rebelling / rebellion. Jaya's Ajji who lives a bare existence after her husband's death, with shaven head; sleeping on the straw mate confined to the room her husband used once, cannot understand Jaya's need to be herself. Sarita's mother, a traditional middle-class woman, does not realize that by
indicting Sarita for Dhruva's death, she is giving the daughter a traumatic
girlhood. By thus "devaluing their daughters they curse them to a life of repressed
hostility; feeling 'unloved' and 'unlovable'. Since the daughters cannot identify
with the perfectionist norms imposed by their mothers, a situation of conflict is
generated. Mothers cannot comprehend it because they themselves have led
'invisible' live [...]" (Bande, "Mother, daughter," 139-140). It resulted in the
feeling of guilt. Adele King in "Shashi Deshpande: Portraits of an Indian
Woman" says:

Saru and Jaya are confronted with an unexamined guilt over a past
incident, a vague feeling of having harmed another being; this guilt
must be brought to the surface. There is, however, no simple
resolution, no answer to the enigma; life must continue, in spite of
conflict and continuity. Both Saru and Jaya seek an inner peace
and a more mature relationship to others. They are, however, in
many ways dependent upon the opinions of their friends and
relatives, and even upon images derived from women's magazine
fiction. Deshpande's characters are not the 'heroines' upon whom
a male narrator projects his desires, or his fears, neither are they the
'female heroes' of some contemporary western feminist fiction.

(162)

Deshpande's mothers are orthodox, uneducated and old-fashioned. They close the
door of progress for their children. The mothers are not all that mute. They
suffered as daughters-in-law and wives, but when they assume power, they wield
their power. Jaya narrates how her too grand-mothers-maternal and paternal —
exercised power over their children. She says: "My two Ajjis, two entirely different women, had been alike in the power they had wielded over their children. Looking back, it seems to me that their children lived their lives reacting against them; life that had turned to be, ultimately, a battlefield of dead hopes and ambitions" (LS 82).

In Shadows, Indu felt uneasy not only about her marriage like Jaya of Silence but about her writing too. She thought that she had not written what she wanted for a long time. She had been writing only what her editor said and what was acceptable to the public. It shows that educated women are bound by the shackles of tradition and convention. Adele King in "Shashi Deshpande: Portraits of an Indian Woman" says:

Responsibility is a particularly charged issue in the world of Deshpande's passive narrators. It is possible to explain their ambivalent attitude towards responsibility in terms applicable to women everywhere. Deshpande's female characters have both a tendency to blame others (typical of anyone seen as less than fully adult, for whom choices are made by parental figures) and a need to feel guilty for actions which are beyond their control (typical of women, who often internalise a male view of women as immoral temptresses). They often worry about matters of responsibility for someone's life or death. Saru, in The Dark Holds No Terrors, can never escape a sense that as a child she was to blame for her younger brother's death. In remembering, relieving this incident, she casts herself as a seductress leading him to his death in
swamp. (This motif is much more fully developed than that of Saru's fear of her husband's sadistic sexual impulses.) Jaya, in That Long Silence, blames herself for leaving the body of her friend, Kamat, without reporting his death, because of fear of what the neighbours might say. (162)

Deshpande juxtaposes her educated, strong-willed, questioning and career-oriented protagonists with the whole lot of self-negating feminine characters. Her protagonists socialize and conform to their expected role but also make choices that provide them with ideas for independence and freedom. Her protagonists' occupation as writers, doctors, singers and political activists impart them an individual space to question conventional cultural assumptions.

Deshpande's women characters break free from ideal womanhood and purity fetish to make a mark in the public sphere. They reject the cult of domesticity. They refuse to valorize marriage. They bring down the structures of confinement and domination. Even though they are mined in silence and find themselves as mothers and wives, which energize and vitalize them, they do not aspire to become superordinate women. They never stop mapping ways to overcome their biological limitations. They decentre the androcentric opinions. They demonstrate how women can cope with demands like parturition, sexual services, and household chores. They overcome their shortcomings. They resist patriarchal interference. They find fulfillment in matters like sex and career even though they cannot freely express them in words or writings. Theirs is a muted and muffled role in a patriarchal social set up.
REFERENCES


