CHAPTER - IV

THE MAKE-BELIEVE WORLD: SPREAD OF EMOTIVENESS
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The short story is the most popular of the entire genre since antiquity but it has lately received much attention of the eastern culture. This belief is substantiated by the contemporary short story writer luminary Ian Reid who says:

The most indefatigably majority is Panchatantra. In its original Sanskrit from it dates back at least to the early sixth century A.D; in a variety of translations it spread through Europe in the Middle Ages; and Thomas North rendered it into English in 1570. From an Italian version of a Latin version of a Hebrew version of an Arabic version of a (lost) Pahlavi (middle Iranian) version of some (lost) Sanskrit version of the original Panchatantra. (18)

During the first two decades of the 20th century the short story began to pour continuously with writers like Anita Desai, Bharti Mukherjee, Shobha Dey, Shashi Deshpande, Jhumpa Lahiri and such other writers. The short story has become noticeable rich in its creative bulk and various forms of short stories are now recognized with equal recognition. There are six forms of short stories, which Ian Reid names as “Tributary forms”-

1. Sketch
2. Yarn
The short story is commonly contrasted to a novel, which is interestingly a wide field of exploration. Robert Creely in his book *The Old Diggers* draws the line of demarcation as:

Where as the novel is a continuum of necessity, chapter-to-chapter, the story can escape from some of the obligation, and function exactly in terms of whatever emotion best can serve it. The story has no time finally, or it hasn't here. Its shape, its form can be so thought of as a sphere, an egg of obdurate kind. The only possible reason for its existence is that it has, in itself, the fact of reality and pressure. There, in short, is its form—no matter how random and broken that will seem. The old assumptions of beginning and the end—that very heat assertions—have fallen away completely in a place where, the only actuality is life, the only end (never realized) death and the only value what love one can manage. (136)

The short story in English has received a new impetus in the significant artistic contribution made by Gauri Deshpande. The many stories collected under the title *The Lackadaisical Sweeper* published in 1997 contains contributions made to books and journals like
Gauri Deshpande's short stories in the collection *The Lackadaisical Sweeper* is an extension of her personal life—"A part of an on-going process: separate the two (life and writing) and you have an incomplete understanding of both" (afterword, 207). Deshpande's short stories are an expression of feminism: "Her anger at the power politics that exists in gender relation." Although the same avenue has been probed into time again by the artistic contributions made by writers like Shashi Deshpande (*The Long Silence*), Shanta Gokhale (*Reeta Wlenkar*), yet a sustained interest cannot be visualized in the gynocentric contributions.

*The Lackadaisical Sweeper* is therefore a work of immense significance as a prose, the truth about the woman, their discord in marital life and frustrations and absurdities in not finding a fitful place next to man. All the stories are focused on the upper crust of Indian society where western influence is in friction with the Indian culture and where a woman is put to much indignation. *The Lackadaisical Sweeper* therefore evokes a world of feminity and puts to strict observance, the complexities of human behavior in relation to feminine world. The feminist sentiments underlined are those that G.S. Amur observes in the preface to *The Legacy*, a collection of short stories by Shashi Deshpande:
Woman's struggle, in the context of contemporary Indian society, to find and preserve her identity as wife, mother and most important of all, as human beings... (243)

The feminine self-articulated by Gauri Deshpande is certainly determined by the psychodynamics of a lonely voice to borrow a Frank or Connor’s expressions yet the effective articulations add to some awareness of the marginalised status of woman in society. Gauri Deshpande’s The Lackadaisical Sweeper is a satisfactory answer to the question debated by Ranjana Harish in her contemplative essay “Male culture, Female strategy”:

Can women adopt traditionally male dominated modes of writing for the articulation of female oppression and desire? (111)

Mary Jacobus possesses this question in her book Women Writing and Writing About Women (1979). She concludes her discussion with the conviction that women must stop reinscribing male words. But in the absence of ‘new stories’ and the ‘power of naming’ to recall Gilbert & Gubar. What choices do women writers have if they do not want to ‘starve in silence’ except to employ gender specific strategies?

The debate over female strategies and female world begins with a delightful story ‘Hookworm, Lamprey Tick, Fluke and Flee’. This story is a subject of much interest for not one or two but four women collaborate to help their friend Jenny through their charitable efforts. The title is suggestive of various fishes used as baits and
each represents the collective women and their humanitarian efforts represent symbiotic relationship between a parasite and a host. As stupid smartarians they help their friend Jenny who is a wastrel and has no goal in life neither a descent job nor liberating freedom but to survive on the mercy and charity of others by pretending not only helplessness but also powerlessness. The five charitable women play as willing host until they realize that they are themselves prey to Jenny who is willingly enjoying problems, easy living through the charitable contributions made by the five women who pours the endless generosity because Jenny’s gifted. With reflexive subjectivity they imbibe her problem and make it their own until Jenny and her family decide to immigrate. Hence the ‘disguised’ story unearths the easiness of a woman to realise her social self whereby they are defeated by their own biological selves.

Social existence with values and ethics in relation to the biological and social selves of a woman needs honest assertion by its own community or the male dominated modes would find new definition of female oppression through the agency of female self. The story is therefore one with different perspective and hence explores the dynamics of female friendship in the making of a new world for women. This story carries a single perception – a demand for inventing female strategy for survival within a psycho social construct where a woman encourages her identity as a compatible partner not only to her male counterpart but also her own gender at large.
This story is striking in its newness and deeply fulfils the need of the time. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Guban in *The Expression of Gynocentical Idea* demand:

Women will starve in silence until new stories are created which confer on them the power of naming themselves. (106)

The story has a noticeable humour and substantial entertainment to initiate reading a collection of short story. This story rightly sets up the mood for reading long hours and promises good fun in the rest of stories to follow. Each of the five characters like Aysha, Shama, Mala, Ratna, Amrita are distinctively described in order to add fullness to the women's proper world. Aysha is the youngest yet the most successful, Mala is a buxom and financially the best as proprietor of an Ad Agency where as Ratna and Amrita as idlers are given to variety where as Shama recently divorced juggles for job, parenthood and selfhood all in one role. All these five collaborate their energy to construct Jenny's life who is pretending unhappiness with her domestic world but is callous to its reconstruction.

The women realise how their services are connivedely used and how they are made to pay big for playing smartarians. The futility of their charity dawns upon them towards the end of the story and they wonder at the pitiable state of affairs they had made of themselves in over doing charity:

She was now here near an early grave; if at all, for further than any of us. We were worn to the
bone being her unpaid slaves, supplying her every need, laying ourselves down to be trampled on and paying our huge telephone bills. (12)

The story makes the words of Joseph Conrad strikingly meaningful:

It is queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own and there have never been any thing like it and never can be. (Feminisms, 913)

**THE LACKADAISICAL SWEEPER**, the second story is the titular one, which once again explores in a comical way the assertion of identity by a woman of a lowly rank. The story has for its pivotal character ‘Seeta’ who is a native from Bangalore and is a sweeper for making her livelihood. Seeta has no such inhibitions about her profession, for her parents and grand parents contributed to the emancipation of the down troddens and the underdogs as members of caste eradication society. Being groomed in such an enlightened family who believe in humanitarian ways, Seeta had zeal to inherit the professional skills and to make her services satisfactory.

Seeta’s family because of its ideological setup faced difficulty to find a suitable match for Seeta, one who could concur with their thinking pattern. After much efforts and vigorous hunt, her marriage was arranged with Narain who was not only pleasing in manners but also educated and was strikingly ambitious for a foreign post. Seeta was happily accepted without any dowry and the
conjugality arose with recognisable spontaneity. The slight dissatisfaction that Seeta realised towards the start of the marital life is the deprivation of renaming ceremony. Narain, her husband, thought that Seeta was a proper name as it denoted wifely virtues. Raja Rao, in the postscript to the novel, describes Narain’s attitude in avoiding a fashionable name to Seeta, as Narain wants her to emulate a goddess, a mythical allegorical being revered as an epitome of servitude. In truth Narain wants her to be no more than a domestic slave. Seeta’s character is here put side by side to Sheila who is also pressed by unwanted situations. Seeta goes for morning walks excitedly in order to put her body in a proper shape and meets Sheila, an unenthusiastic and sluggish yet passionate soul who drags herself on an unhappy walk. Sheila and Seeta living in the same apartment building gradually discover each other’s lives and emotions. Sheila is six months pregnant and is quite large as well as tall with striking American accent, whereas her husband is an airlines steward who is Sheila’s darling and pride. Narain found the friendship between two ladies incompatible. His reaction is instantaneous and demeaning to Seeta:

An Airline steward! You’re not serious. Will you tell me how they can afford to stay in the building? Even in this area? Airline steward! Trust you to pick the one woman in the crowd who is perfectly useless! Stung by his contempt, the earlier rebel thought came back: friends went to the same
school, lived on the same street, came ones way through family. (18)

Narain's super imposition of his hideous intent continues to add to Seeta's passivity. She is not even allowed to decide when to bare a child; astonishingly Narain announces that no child for first three years of marital life. Seeta's voice is hardly made articulative. When Narain instruct Seeta to collect information about Jake's easy money, Seeta feels reluctant to question Sheila for such a personal and private detail in order to satisfy Narain's curiosity:

Wonder what scam he's pulling? Narain winked and laughed and the rest shared the joke. But Seeta was puzzled and asked one of the women who said a little condescendingly, 'You know! All these stewards and stewardesses are always into smuggling'. (20)

Seeta is amazed at Sheila noticing small things in life and enjoying the best of it. When Seeta inform Sheila about an Englishman invited by Narain to their place, Sheila excitedly talk about her love for languages and her desire for a host of people around her. It is her social agility that has made Sheila popular among her friends and Seeta visualized the enormous circle of friends that Sheila had won by her passionate and greedy manners with every walk. Seeta unlayers Sheila's personality to Narain. Every detail personal, mental, economic float to Narain through his wife, Seeta in easy installments. Sheila extends a number of invitations to Seeta and
Narain but Narain politely turns it down and notices Seeta looking perplexed. Narain had the teeth to say that he was interested only in "striking a property deal with them (24)". When Narain compliments Seeta's help vociferously Seeta looked amazed:

She was a great deal puzzled as to how she had been of any help but as usual did not ask content to bask in her husband's rare expression of appreciation . . . she could share this with Sheila, who had unstintingly though almost always incomprehensibly poured out so many intimate details of her own conjugal bed. (25)

It was Narain who along with his friend Graham churned problem for Sheila who had to leave along with Jake with surprising surrender. Seeta contemplated over Narain's selfish gesture and debated the issue with a heavy heart now singular on a morning walk with much pain in her heart:

Was it not wrong to benefit from your friends troubles however deserved? ... had they not dinned into her head that after marriage a woman's first duty is to her husband? And hadn't she done well, however unwittingly, by helping him? What was it then, that made her so unhappy? (27-8)

'The Lackadaisical Sweeper' projects woman as an embodiment of multiple selves through which she depicts herself invariably in three positions. The protagonist Seeta is here not only subjected to negation of her rights and authenticity but the over ridding is also extended to
her friend Sheila. That the details of Sheila is carefully used on a sly for a material purpose reveals how Seeta—the traditional representative of mythological 'Seeta' is deceived by her own husband who is also mythologically representative of 'Ram'. This reveals domestic exploitation by insidious ways targeted mentally by her own counter part. The three selves of Seeta are carefully delineated where by we make an interesting grasp of Seeta as a living soul privately and socially in her relations to others. Anjali Patwardhan Kulkarni in her article "The Bitter story of a Divided Self: Womanhood in Marathi Women's Autobiographies" explains:

[a] The social self, which projects her public image. She views herself in connection with society at large, more often as the daughter, sister, wife, mother of some one and occasionally as an individual working in a certain capacity or for certain social cause. This self occupies the visible peripheral fringe of her existence.

[b] The familial self in which she is inextricably bound to her parents, siblings, husband, in-laws, children and relatives. She looks at herself again from an outsider's point of view, evaluating herself on the basis of how far she succeeds in rising up to other's expectations determined by the role she plays. This self occupies a major part of her life. (81-2)
She seeks both the social and familial selves in the eyes of others, seeking satisfaction in being recognised by others. The 'private self' is at the core of her consciousness. Sometimes she even fails to recognise, face and explore this self. To recognise this self is to stumble upon self-realization. Grasping this self, understanding it, evaluating it and above all respecting it is perhaps the most important but the most difficult outcome of an autobiographical writing. This is essentially the search for the realm which may run contrary to the image of the social self and this makes her feel apologetic about the different self.

**HELLO, STRANGER!** explores the strange aspect of male personality. The story begins with cataphoric reference:

His wife was in there having their baby. He should have been inside to witness this unique and wonderful event but he had explained to her when the subject came up that he could not face her suffering with equanimity. (29)

The beginning as 'his wife' with a pronominal determiner adds universality to the story. Insertion of proper noun is deliberately delayed in order to add a sense of general assumption. ‘Hello Stranger’ interestingly explores a father's emotional and mental state at the arrival of his baby in the modern times, juxtaposed through recollection of the time elapsed. The modern and the ancient modes of parenting now reveal how parenting has become equally a serious concern for the male parent.
Apart from this, the story also reveals how illumined parents value gender equality and to them a girl child is more and intense a desire than a male:

He hoped he would have a daughter. On the whole, he thought, daughters demanded less from their parents. Mani his own sister had a perfectly workable relationship with his parents while he and his brother, especially he, suffered guilt and mortification is silence: unspoken, unacknowledged, bottled up feelings emotions and silences that had led him down a terrible path. (32-3)

The protagonist here appreciates his sister in her devotion to her family, both during maiden and marital status. Through self-introspection the protagonist compares his weaknesses with his wife’s attribution and he realises that it was his wife’s optimism that had killed his sense of nothingness and restructured his vision to life:

He suspected that he was a gloomy sort of person to start with, not sunny and full of the goodness of life like his wife. That was what had first attracted him to her. She seemed to brim with optimism and good thoughts. He did grasp, that a woman who was a stranger to life’s wants, material, social, emotional or political was more likely to be sunny tempered than not. (33)

This story is constituted on self-regulatory efficacy behavior by which an adult measures his own performance
or his own accomplishment through measuring of past experiences. Such experiences are categorized as:

1. **Vicarious Experience** – One's observations of the performance of others.
2. **Persuasion** – Others may convince that one can do something or one may convince oneself.
3. **Monitoring of one's emotional arousal as one thinks about or approach a task** – for example, anxiety suggests low expectations of efficacy; excitement suggests expectations of success.

( Understanding Human Personality, 480)

The self-efficacy model devised by Bandura and his colleagues in 2002 very well traces the movement of the story. The protagonist is accommodative and admits his wife's efficacy much more adequate while comparing to his own. Therefore he makes his life more comfortable for both are reciprocal which is the substance of efficacy expectation and as a result the relationship is not only satisfying for the prevailing time but also time to come which is named as 'outcome expectations' in the given model
The announcement of the birth of a son immediately replaces the expectations he had nourished with the birth of a female child. He at once shuns his beliefs and desires and immediately picks up fresh desires as a compatible parent accepting the situation, as it now existed. The Protagonist also realises that his son would never encompass the glory of his native place and should be as alien to his motherland as he is to his own. The 'we-feeling' of his community he now misses which earlier he felt repulsive. With his migration he lost the innate hospitality, which now fills him with loneliness and humiliation in the foreign land, where hearts throbs are not measured but only superficial counted as courtesy. The story talks about the biological mother and the geographical mother as immortal givers. This story adds reverence to both the images of mother where by the mother image is held up with recognisable nobility.

Gender relation is further extended to the succeeding story 'A HARMLESS GIRL', narrated in first person with pronominal 'I'. Here the cultural self of a woman is described in order to show how a woman's individual cultural self is eroded by gender conceptualisation structured by the society. This has fated her as a marginal self- an interdependent being. Hazel Markus and Shinobu Kitayama discuss how the self-concept and the self-development are affected by cultural constraints. A female self is subjected to the ideological belief restoring to her self-handicapping. They are two:
Individualistic culture encourage independent construal of self – Achieving the cultural goal of independence requires construing oneself as an individual whose behavior is organized and made meaningful primarily by reference to one’s own internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings and action, rather than by reference to the thoughts, feelings and emotions of others.

Collectivist cultures encourage interdependent construal of self – Experiencing interdependence entails seeing oneself as part of an encompassing social relationship and recognizing that one’s behavior is determined contingent on and to a large extent organized by what the others perceives to be the thoughts, feelings and actions of others in the relationship. (Markus & Kitayama, 227)

Humorously the story describes the don’ts laid down for a female self so much so that a female hardly enjoys the pleasure of being a ‘being’. The environment prescribes the moral and ideal standards for a female self-causing not only subjective distress but also self-negations. The story is more into the ‘elapsed’ time than the ‘prevailing’. The protagonist is, as of the previous story, self-introspective. She explores her inner mind set in relation to the nurturing processes. The story therefore becomes interesting for a female reader because the details enumerated are common to almost all Indian families and the upbringing of the female child is no
different from the ordinary middle class environment. The protagonist describes her upbringing as loathsome to the parents and they believed a male child to be an honour on the contrary a female child is a stigma to the parents and is regarded as an unavoidable material burden throughout their lives. The subjugation of a female personality is a natural as well as normal process and the discrimination between the sexes awards privileges to the boy child and deprives, for no reason, a female child. The protagonist records the some discriminative survival as:

I grew up to the practically non-existent In my eternal endeavour to live harmlessly, botherlessly, noiselessly, I learnt to tiptoe, to wear only flat, rubber-soled shoes, to eat and drink not only without making the smallest noise but even without making the smallest movement. My voice sank to the point of inaudibility and I learnt to sleep under any circumstances, even standing up. (44 - 5)

The realisation that woman executes patriarchal values shows the light of a woman as a sufferer. The protagonist analyses the gender hierarchy where feminine side is always seen as negative. Helen Cixous in under the heading ‘Where is She’ lines up the following binary opposition which might also be called as ‘Patriarchal Binary Thought’;

Activity / Passivity
Sun / Moon
Culture / Nature
The protagonist is transported from a noiseless existence to a noisy one after her marriage with Harish who was noisy with every effort and every movement. Humourously the opposites are detailed as:

I noiselessly fell in the love at a ripe old age, with the noisiest, brashest, heartiest, laughingest man anyone had ever met. No one had ever seen his mouth closed not even in sleep, because then he kept it open and snored. He crunched, munched, roared and commented his way through every movie and naturally didn’t hear a word of the dialogue. (47)

The marital life turned out to be quiet, cordial and the conjugality provided her ample freedom to prove her good taste and impeccable orderliness. With her sneaky and strategic moves she could battle out her husband’s tremendous sound effect. The noise level of the house was there by made somewhat tolerable. This self-defense unnoticeably brought about some changes in the protagonist, which she later realised in her amazement

... I learnt to be a bit more audible, there were definite limits to how much I could obtrude on people’s attention. For instance,
after exposure to Hari, I could actually take a swallow from a glass of water instead of sipping at it for fifteen minutes as I used to do. .. (50)

Luce Irigaray defines this notion of woman as:

Feminism is not simply about rejecting power, but about transforming the existing power structures- and in the process, transforming the very concept of power itself. (Patriarchal Reflections, 147)

The protagonist loved her partner with all observing encompassing and delightful love even though people called them “the odd couple”. The protagonist catapulted into startling transformation when she was pregnant. She describes her first trimester of pregnancy as:

He was also suitably gratified when I was noisily weepy, vociferously morning sick, thunderously heavy treated .... All in all, the goddamn pregnancy was a revelation through which I discovered the delights of noise and joyously justified the necessity of Being a Bother. (51-2)

The protagonist gives birth to a baby girl. It was her turn to be surprised at her husband’s completely changed personality. The audible bundle of movements who made the world go deep with his resonance now beamed noiselessly. Surprisingly “he blushed, swelled and was quite mute and speechless” (53). The story describes how roles and responsibilities change a male as strongly as it
does a woman. The change is once again recorded with a subtle touch of humour that tantalizes the reader:

When Hari came to see me, on what he thought were footfalls like feathers, he did, sound like only one man and not a herd of buffalo. May be the thoughts of the onerous responsibilities of fatherhood were calming him down...(52)

The protagonist describes this state of change as “history was made”

A HARMLESS GIRL is a witty story exploring gender relations where noise is used as a metaphor to designate patriarchal privilege and assertion of superiority. With the use of situational irony the tables are turned when the protagonist becomes the noisiest during her conception and a noisy female child is born to them. The infant is equally noisy and the message that reaches us through the small bundle of noise is what Simone De Beauvoir has said ‘One is not born a woman, one becomes one’.

MAP is another story where male gaze is explored in order to define the level of sexual dependence of woman on man. The Map is again a story with first person narrative where by the story sounds more plausible and credulous. With intent to explore her body, the narrator invites a cartographer to map her body. The result was wondrous, for the protagonist learned some amazing facts about her physical self:

How my feet were ‘Grecian’, how my hair a peculiar brown that shaded off into burnt
umber, how my fingers, each had a different face and a different character... Half the time I did not know what he was talking about, but I was sure it was flattering and therefore true. All the time his imagination was creating a me I did not know any thing about. (55)

Raman Seldem points out that:

A woman under patriarchal value system is considered to be inferior to a man in five areas-1. Biology 2. Experience 3. Discourse 4. The Unconscious 5. Social & Economic conditions. Biologically a woman's body is perorative of reproduction. No more than a "Womb". ('Woman as a Possessor', Feminism and Recent fiction in English, 75)

This idea is redefined in the physicality of feminity. The protagonist details how the cartographer used all his skills in order to map her body, but the result was not exhilarating to the protagonist, for the cartographer with total passivity, did his task and therefore the woman in the protagonist eluded the cartographer:

He collected his paraphernalia, the cartographer's tools of the trade-his compasses, spirit levels, monoculars and binoculars, coloured pencils, rolls of papers... He cocked an eye at me regretfully, was going to say, 'It was nice knowing you, but easily restrained himself, as was his habit, shrugged his shoulders and went. I know I am nearly old,
devoid of virtue (in the Chaucerian sense, meaning juice), mystery, treasure and adventure. (58)

The Map did not fill her with any sense of joy. The protagonist wonders whether mapping herself was a show of foolishness but he intends to know herself in a own personal way by redefining and reimagining herself. Lineaments like “Tibetan forehead, Terai-paddy, hair, Himalayan breasts, Gangetic abdomen, Vindhyaa-Satpuda bush, Eastern and Western Ghat arms, Silent valleys, Nilgiri legs, toes” (59) – an antipatriarchal rage by which she desires transformations of her physical self. The discourse used by her, also reflects the strength and her independence to construct her life in her own private and personal way. She calls a sweat line Bramhaputra and the other one Sarswati for naming gives her individuality. Interestingly the story explores the psychic state of a woman who is deprived of recognition for her female body and her womanly responsibility her proclamation about singularity towards the close of the story describes the urge of the personal and emotional in a woman:

... this is the map of my body and these are the names of my body parts. I have imagined them all, all by myself, and so they are mine, above all. (62)

The Map is a tribute to Edward Said – this gesture adds another dimension to the story where by a metaphorical significance gets appended to the story. Raja Rao describes the additional meaning as:
... ‘the narrator woman’ is India and the cartographer, the imperial power. The epigraph to the story gives us a clue: as we saw earlier gender relations on a wider scale. (211)

Socio-cultural milieu is loathed at and a woman’s urge to explore her identity independently is the new expression of rebellion quest for physical and emotional identity as a being for one self is reflective of a woman’s debate about her social and psychological existence. Gauri Deshpande’s new woman discredits the traditional image of womanhood and overtly exemplifies “woman no longer swing in the ancient orbit” (Times of India, 6)

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO is a story that explores the mode of living in the midst of a number of activities, observations, desires, aspirations, inhibitions and failures. The protagonist is fascinated by centripetal forces of living that defines her existence. To use another term, she is observant of the foils who contribute to the living of the ‘majors’. The protagonist is attracted by everything that was remotely connected to her life. She therefore made intensive recordings of the bit players who made brief appearances in her life, intact in her memory. She found that there were many impressions and passions entertaining and tantalizing, contributing a totally new meaning to one’s observation about life. She describes the process as:

... I seemed to get lost in a dense, milling background of these minor characters scuttling in and out of the corners of my life. I was
beginning to blend seamlessly into this clutter. Soon, no one would be able to tell me apart from it. (65)

The protagonist locates mentally one of her junior schoolmate, when a phone call in the morning makes an eager introduction to her. The weedy-looking boy - a bit-player become afresh in her memory and the friendship resume no sooner than he appeared physically in Tokyo. Entertaining him in her home she caught trail of elapsed time and they both globe-trot in the remote past. She recalls how intimately he values her physical looks and health, admiration for her attractive, glamorous and rebellious nature. She looked at him and empathetically surveyed the old peripheral existence that appeared “blurred with fate”; hair decreased and had become a habitual boozer. He followed her hungrily in the kitchen and finally became physical with the protagonist who was now a widow. Sexuality was her sympathetic gesture and she allowed the bit player to discover her ageing beauty:

The poor, small thing by practically indiscernible in the hairy pelt below his navel and there wasn’t a spark of illumination in it. (70)

Later in her solitary bed she despises the old man’s presence in such an unnoticing manner. So another want of bit player becomes phallic but this time her companion is a female, suggestive of sisterhood, once again she eagerly responds to the meeting but soon is dropped when her friend windups the togetherness by her courteous greeting:
I expect I will run into you again some time, some place; till then, goodbye. I will tell everyone you said hi. And she left me with my mouth still open and the too-ready apology still unuttered. And don't ask me who played Third Murderer... I don't know. (73)

**SMILE, AND SMILE AND...** is a story with a new probe. It debates the efficiency of a professional woman as a boss in her coordination with male subordinates. With a large number of Indian women turning career oriented, the use of pronominal 'I' for the protagonist, is Deshpande's appreciation of women, exploring financial field of existence. In demand of equality of two men, the question related to attitude is there by contemporary in argument. The exploration has universal overtones, therefore geographical boundaries are transcended and the protagonist leaps up to Japan to officiate as an officious Boss. The protagonist on reaching Japan wanted to become an efficient office lady in order to affirm the business skill of the Japanese subordinates in her burgeoning expectations of making high profits and to satisfy their clients for years at stretch, in order to have long business relationship. Because the protagonist has discovered her identity as a woman with business acumen, she takes up the challenge of reviving their profit scale and of establishing herself as the most sought after Boss. The protagonist had earlier served in the same Japanese office as a colleague and head devised a strategy to make herself acceptable. She recalls her effective gains as:
Since I was staff, I could not be dismissed like the giggling, tea-making, pencil-sharpening, plant-watering OL (office lady), but being a woman, I could not be included in their bar-hopping and karaoke-singing. They'd never had to deal with women as equals. Even their "equal" women: doctor's, lawyers, professors, councilors, 'knew their places', being Japanese. I refused to put up with being treated as anything but equal . . . . I ended up bar-hopping and karaoke-singing with them. (75-6)

Second time when the protagonist reached Japan as a Boss, she felt she was carrying on an insurmountable problem for being on Indian and a woman who would doubly play offensive to her one-time colleague. The protagonist was well armed for the problems right under her noose as she had a working knowledge of Japanese. First few weeks, she made a deep study of the work process and felt she needed to shun authoritative dictates to Mr. Miyura who was second to her rank. Neither she realized that he was neither honest nor a partisan but he was gentle to his customers and in his compliance to the Japanese buyer, there were few Japanese buyers, there were few cancellations of contracts. The protagonist lost her temper when she heard Miyura sorrowfully agree to one of the customers in her racial remark on Indian. She exploded:

In that case Mr. Miyura you must be ashamed of working for us! He was almost blasted out of
his seat with shock. Colour flooded his face and receded, leaving it looking sick. I turned to the customer and asked him in over-correct, textbook-learnt but comprehensible and serviceable Japanese what the trouble was. (78)

The protagonist was the one who felt successful in creating a situation of superiority by the issue of ‘Misplaced Patriotism’ but because Miyura was Japanese, the protagonist did not demand a resignation and allowed the thing to run its natural course. The prejudice against Japanese male continued to be her guideline in a strategy against such odds. The protagonist believed Miyura to be using the Japanese strategy in appearing as someone superior to him in rank. The protagonist suspected Miyura of disastrous rebuttal “Either thinking of killing me or killing himself (80)” To evade the situation the protagonist found her conjectures vain and embarrassing. When Miyura confessed his strategy of avoiding argument with dissatisfied customer and later providing him with better sample in order to retain order, the protagonist had intervened with aggressive statement announcing her patriotism and utilising her officious position. Even though the matter was settled yet the protagonist kept strong vigilance on Miyura in order to discuss the man under the business garb. She followed him to Hiroshima in order to discover his personal self and was shocked to learn the pain and the despair under the plastic stature and smile on Miyura’s face. He confided:
I am a *hibakusha*, you see, a child of the Bomb. That's why I must report quickly to the hospital here, where I am registered, in case I notice any unusual symptoms. (84)

The protagonist apologises for her spy and tricks but Miyura continued to smile as if singling the protagonist that the gesture is her inadequacy, not his. The story seems to echo what Vinita Dawra Nangia in her article 'Well love you just the way you are . . . if you are perfect' says:

As women gain confidence and poise they are not just challenging men in their own space but also questioning what for generation has been accepted male behavior. That leaves men befuddled. (*Times of India*, Times Life, 13 May, 2007)

The inadequacy executed by male superiority for ages cannot be the form of avenge for a woman with a baton. Vinita Dawra rightly argues what Gauri Deshpande fictionalises in the story understudy:

Is any wonder then that most women think men today seem confused, inflexible and inadequate? He's damned if he does: damned if he doesn't! And either way, he certainly can't hope to measure up to the paragon we dream of! (*Times of India*, Times Life, 13 May, 2007)

INSY, WINSY SPIDER is another feminist story that explores the mother daughter relationship. It explores the self-ossifying between the detached self and a bonded
The story is against the backdrop of Buddhism that propagates liberation from desire as a profit of the spirituality. The desire to grow in one's own spiritual awareness is the goal that Buddhism propagates. The spiritual journey is not here about achievement but about the genuine values of life. Love, light, liberty and the final destination that Vishalakshi, the protagonist craves for. The protagonist is a woman who knows her mind and about the mode of making the best in life. She pursues her study much against the annoyance of a father who believes that marriage is the most desirable goal for her. She opts for an M.Phil degree in Philosophy on “Some Problems About The Concept of Self In Hinayana Philosophy”. Later she falls in love with another teacher of Philosophy during her teaching career and marries him. Substantially focused on her academic career, Vishalakshi grows expansive in her knowledge and gains privilege of being well read socially and personally. Blessed with a daughter Maitreyi, she devotes herself to her career with a much ‘Higher’ thinking in order to be a role model for her. Assuming that her daughter would imitate her academic pursuits, she shifted housekeeping to second ranking in the list of priorities. The protagonist admits her strategic intents for an illustrious future of her daughter. She admits:

I ignored their children chat. Also ignored remarks she made at the age of twelve - actually shocking enough - such as, ‘Must make a separate garlic tadka for the palak, you know . . . . Whatever else
my husband and I disagreed upon, we were perfectly in accord about the great future we foresaw for our daughter. (122-23)

All mighty dreams for Maitreyi crashed with one loudness when she announced her desire to marry the son of one of her colleagues even before she completed her B.A. She announced her disinterest in further studies to which the protagonist and her husband violently resented:

What the hell do you mean, not interested in studies? You tell me! The poor, lame, blind and stupid are struggling panting for an education. And here are you who's got it on a platter not interested! I don't believe this! (123-24)

The grandfather approves of his granddaughter's wish and the couple looked dismayed at the grandfather-granddaughter - conspiracy. She is also taken aback by the rudeness with which she expresses her vision of future- "I don't want to do anything else, I just want to get marriage and look after my home and family". The protagonist stood speechless at the priorities her daughter decided for her soon-to-start marital life. To get out of her annoyance and sorrow she cried bitterly and her husband stepped forward to console her but the words instead of being embalming where all the more offensive:

It was wrong to stop after only one child. If we had another, we could have tried to bring it to out point of view and you wouldn't have felt so bad! (124)

The interplay of the self and the world finds a new dimension in the form of two instances as mother and
daughter with the singular perspectives. The perspective of the daughter is inherently Indian. To her the home is the entire world. Where as to the mother the wider world of action is synonymous to inner as well as the outer liberty.

**VERVAIN** is the extension of **INSY, WINSY, SPIDER** where life is given a further probe to put on record the manifestation of richness within along with the innovativeness and the resolution that structures the private and domestic sphere. It is commonly observed that a woman stands non-existent in the economic and social sphere. She is subjected to passivity both in terms of motherhood and female counterpart. Her complete existence is under the analytical gaze of male partner whether it be a matter of domestic decision or the upbringing of the off springs or related to ones own space and existence. Her existence is bounded by the ideals constructed by male for their idea of an ideal society. At such a situation a woman is expected to play a conformist. Non-conformity adds more plight to her suffering and alienation is her self defense mechanism. The restrictions of speech, sexuality and identity add to male privilege and thereby gender identity in terms of prey and predator emerges spontaneously. The cultural stereotypes, there by keep the female sufferings and the male domination essential models for ages to come and ages to elapse.

Elizabeth the pivotal character was named and renamed with the arrival of every uncle and aunt to bless the new born and in this process she is swayed from
Elizabeth to Bettina and then to Lee and Lily, Marlee and finally Li-Ta. This two syllabic name gives her a strange identity that of a Chinese. Li-Ta had a different childhood due to political conditions in Germany. She lost quite a number of relatives in war for turbulent Germany needed hundreds and thousands of martyrs. So much so that she lost connection with the purity of the place where she was born:

However, unknown to anyone, she too must have missed the smells and the bed and the sounds of the house. She became fretful and troublesome and sickly and no one guessed she was pinning. (Everyone supposed she was too little, yet she remembered all this years later when she was in therapy). (130)

Li-Ta took up the colour of rusticity as time moved on and finally when she returned back home she found an empty home along with the memories of a mother who left simple docile girl to play a foster mother. The number of responsibilities that poured on her added a large burden to her otherwise perturbed life:

...and at the age often, she became mother, companion, chatelaine, cook-housekeeper, confident and advisor to three men; the youngest of whom was twelve years older than her and the eldest close to sixty. They had nothing and no one but her in their ruined lives in a ruined home in a rained city in a ruined
country (and as far as she knew, in a ruined world). (131 - 32)

Serving the man at home is her only service at hand. The fate of Elizabeth or Li-Ta is the fate of the woman at large that accepts that their existence depends on the wish of the man and their happiness comes through man’s desire. Her devotion to domesticity continued until the age of twenty. By this time she lost her father and her brothers Franz and Arnold had left for Canada and Australia respectively. She not only resumed her academic studies but also gymnasium and baccalaureate. During her M.A. course in History she found a life partner in Hans-Jaochim who was twelve years older to her in age and in nativity a half Sark and half Ukranian. Her wedding was extreme satisfaction to her family and to her own self for it restored to her the family of men. She discovered conjugality, motherhood as well as creativity as she advanced in age and in commitment to life. Her world of contentment soon suffered a smash when her husband Hanz-Jaochim announced that he was inviting an Indian colleague and his wife home for dinner. This made Li-Ta panic stricken and she collected all her might and strength in order to fight out the challenging forces when DT arrived. She motivated Li-Ta for use of her knack for history in creating a new world about She proposes a joint venture:

Akbars and Shivajis and all the ‘boys’? Lets find out what the world is really about, Li-Ta
and you can come along and burrow in the achieves for us! Come on! (138)

Li-Ta is impressed by the sisterhood proposed by some one who she was on intruder and was afraid of her beauty and wit snares. She made her feel and realise that men are the leaders and women their subordinates. She suggested that Li-Ta find her own space and enjoy her desire to its optimum without slogging for the men about. Li-Ta realises that DT secretly named all those wishes which she herself was not able to locate for herself. The betrayal, oppression and suffering now become meaningful and she discovered how the boys at home make themselves important, have had fun outside whereas she continued as a non entity at home. Li-Ta now becomes clear of a state of living and with purposiveness returned to bed, she enjoys a sound sleep for she had got her therapist. The short story illustrates what T.N. Singh in his article "Feminism and Fiction: Some Reflections" states;

"The whole aim of living is to develop our personality to its optimum potentiality. How to optimize the business of living?" The concept of feminism is here articulated as an answer to this. (Feminism and Recent Fiction in English, 20)

Vervain is the story set in the west and the majors and the foils commonly hail from Germany to add more tickle to the story. The names are curiously coined for example Li, for Elizabeth and Ta for Carlotta. Like wise the visitor as DT. That Li-Ta returns back to her
monotonous routine of caring for her 'man' shows that her fifty five years long service to man has occupied a deep seated placed in her personality whereby her subserviences to man is natural. The close of the story therefore adds humour to the story.

**ROSE JAM** is a story where the stream of unusualness is maintained. The narrator is much sure that her family is different and she keeps on repeating the same throughout the length of the story. The fun associated with oriental living is well worked out here. The narrator who lives in the occidental world wonders at the strange ways of living in the west. For example she expresses the strangeness with which a girl becoming woman is celebrated with rituals. Likewise the exotic names with which the children are addressed by the seniors in order to express love and care and to instill a sense of belongingness. The narrator misses this fun and the pain she expresses carries a strong emotive strain:

so I thought I had better put in a word for the millions of Indians like myself who are not in the least exotic and yet are perfectly Indian (just let them try and get a visa from any of the above mentioned immigrant havens), who had run of the mill childhoods and who never got around to writing bestselling books about the special ingredients that went into Grandmother Goddess-of-wealth's special curry. (143)

The story is recollection of all that which constitutes oriental and is detailed in the mode of reminiscencing.
The story is in fact a fictional reshaping of the essays she has written about her family. The narrator recalls how her grandmother who could prepare ‘Rose Jam’ fairly well made stuff a fancy for all because the narrator’s family was disinterested in cooking. Such damn stuffs they hardly prepared, this made a pathetic sight of the eaters who had no option but to survive on the fanciful cooking. The grandparents lived most of their lives away from India- in Burma where their five sons were born and the colour of strangeness seeped into their beings. The narrator finds it exotic that the interesting and exciting adventurous life made them a truly representative and traditional Indian family. What she despised was:

And what is more damning is that they were interesting in a western, non Indian way, thus relegating me, their descendant, equally given to the untraditional pastimes of globe trotting and taboo-breaking, to a uniform greyness in the eyes of her acquaintances all over the world. (145)

Finally amusing is the fact that she lost few of children for she had forgotten to give the number. The daughter in the family was therefore in the prized position and was given free will in terms of knowledge and education. Her intimacy with her daughter even made the old lady pickup bits of English and value the Cambridge Punctuations which the men in the family adorned in their speech. The narrator’s mother interestingly nurtured unnatural goals in the realm of higher education which
she attained by resorting to unnatural mode of pressure. For example after every success in the examination she locked herself in a room refusing food for long hours and sitting back in a dump room infested with rats until permission to pursue study was granted. The six helpless males (a father and five brothers) worrying about her delicate health, surrendered to her whims and the reconciliation to inevitable, finally made her gone to college. The narrator recalls with equal joy, the untraditional modes by which her predecessors had revolted against the common form of living. The narrator’s mother married the man of choice by such willful ways as may be locking one self up in an old bathroom. Her grandfather also showed rebellious ways in asserting the occidental mode of living:

And besides, my father’s father had courted and married Baya after her first husband had died. (sorry, no forcing-into-marriage-by-crud-father etc. here either) This marriage was perfectly legitimate as far as the law of the land was concerned (British Law) but not at all acceptable to religion and society: so far all practical purposes, my father and his brothers were bastards no matter what the law said. And a lecturer? (149)

The narrator calls her family eccentric because her grandfather who had devoted a large part of his life to the cause of furthering the education of women in India and had founded a university and as conventional father in
his own sons who were sent for higher education after innumerable shows of revolt.

The marriage of her grand father was equally a revolutionary step for widow remarriage was regarded sinful and such marriages were socially denounced. Nevertheless they combated the social boycott with wisdom and established a hut for their own family a few miles outside the common haunt. And from such a mean beginning they rose up to illustrious service to mankind. Her grandmother Baya was a woman of undaunted will and blessed with clear vision for future. When the narrator’s elder son wanted to go to England to get his M.D. Baya manage to get a big loan from the money lender on the assurance ‘When my son is a doctor, he will pay you back’ (155) and the money was advanced. Equally interesting is Baya’s adoption of a many stray daughter’s “which showed her affirmativeness”. Shruti Das in her essay ‘Feminist as Pop Fantasy’ describes the change of feminine state of living as:

For women liberation means self-determination. The real female combined in her the so called feminine qualities of nurturance, compassion, tenderness, sensitivity, affirmativeness, co-operativeness with the so called masculine qualities of aggressiveness, initiative and competitiveness. (Feminism and Recent Fiction in English, 221)

As years rolled on, the narrator grew up with yearly association of a few days with her grand mother. Summers were togetherness for the whole family as narrator’s
mother, a college teacher, remained at home to prepare the annual supply of pickle and jam. During such holidays, the narrator was strained in preparing 'Rose Jam' and had also gained good health through out her life because of the wonderful miraculous preparations. She says:

I am certain it is only on account of this wonderful remedy that I never had heatstroke, sunburn, headache or nosebleed throughout those carefree, out of doors summers. (158)

When the narrator went to California along with her parents on visiting professorship, she wondered at the essence of orientation. She was asked to wear ethnic clothes in order to display oriental richness but this turned out to be falls for she was subjected to savage racial prejudices even though she argued with inimitable logic, the glory of a folks. As a defense mechanism, the narrator adopted what the others held up to glory:

... No one thought I was an Indian, but most did remark upon my 'funny' accent, so I explained it by saying that I was an Indian, and got a foretaste of things to come. (159-60)

The hybrid identity added strangeness to her identity. Because of this she adopted a forlorn nature. She enjoyed not only westernized ways but also personal liberty and therefore the family much despaired when they found she was not a virgin. The narrator strongly put her foot down and continued with her freakish ways "past a foreign, nobody with a peculiar accent". The narrator finally went
to her Californian boyfriend not with intent to marry but to prove her exotic richness along with the nutritive value of the 'Rose Jam' was on test. The story tries to assert that how women in their efforts to establish racial and individual identities resort to uncanny ways. The story is contemporarily relevant as has been identified by K.A. Patel:

Much of the current writing has tilted more towards examining the position of women in the urban and the modernized sector of societies, concentrating on those who are already educated and employed and from a privileged minority in their countries. (India in English Fiction, 55).

Not only the female psyche but also the male, is the territory in which Gauri Deshpande moves with equal amount of concern, justice and expertise. It is acknowledgement of compassion in a man, which is at large regarded as feminine attribute. The unnamed narrator in the story with subtle purpose leaves his urban surrounding and lands in a village with a desire to change their mode of living. Ironically the narrator accepts his new surroundings and becomes a part of it. So much so his belief is self concept for successful living also changes and he realizes the differences between illusion and reality. The narrator with his knowledge, urban skills and mind set holds a superior position and looks down upon others as subordinates. He held himself to the level of arrogance for he knew that the simple rustics could never believe of:
However, my unwarranted pride in my familiarity with such esoteric knowledge, my acquisition of a few letters after my name, and my experience of having knocked about a few countries in the world led me to assume that my rural 'colleagues' would view me with awe, admiration and — I must admit it — gratitude. I pictured myself forever rushing to their aid, smiling benevolently, bottle of iodine in one hand and sack of aspirins in the other. (165)

The narrator who represented not only material and social supremacy, wanted to uphold himself as a national genius and in this effort, he started lending money against salaries of the common rustics. But then the foolishness was discovered quite late as the number of debtors increased day by day and the recovery of money was not possible as most of them were poor earners with irregular work. In order to maintain her economic progress, he decided to employ a man to coax all those in debt to be present to do some work. This is how the overseer stepped in. The overseer is young, fine featured and a frail personality who looked more an effeminate than an officious staff. He was unauthoritative on face but was of much advantage as he not only veiled authority but also made a deep probe of "where and how" the things went wrong. Soon things went on efficiently and quite profitably and the consumptions between the narrator and the overseer became more serious and time taking. The narrator on exploring the where about of his overseer,
found that his authority laid in his caste and his family. This was another pack of amazement to him as caste supremacy and material authority were the two weapons with which he controlled people around:

I wondered how I could regain the reins of my own life from the hands of this perfect monster disguised as a pretty little man with a silly little moustache, who was, as I had always suspected, the embodiment of all that is nefarious in Modern India. (170)

Benedict in his book ‘Patterns of Culture’ describes this attitude as:

God gave to every people a cup, a cup of day and from this cup they drank their life .... They all dipped in the water but their cups were different. (1934: 33)

The narrator now becomes dubious on the moves of the overseer. He imagined him as anti social robber or a benedict or may be a pirate who was exploiting people to make big exhortation but on observing his activities he remained confused for the overseer displayed not only industry but also togetherness.

The pirate was economically and busily directing others to direct water into the proper channels for my nearly planted trees, keeping an eye on the correct amount of industry displayed by a couple of ditch-diggers and saying something pleasant to the giggling girls weeding nearly. This picture of exemplary and totally un-pirate-like activities
evoked what was almost a giggle from my neighbor too. (173)

The illusion was totally shattered when the overseer arrived one Sunday afternoon with a small tote bag containing a puppy. Presenting this gift he added that the puppy would give him company and could be called pirate and this made the narrator burst into a raucous laugh. The story reminds us of R.K. Narayan who uses similar kind of Janus-Headed Ending in order to continue the final look back “which is essential to the closed endings... with the suggestion that life goes forward which is essential to the open one.”

**DMITRI IN THE AFTERNOON** is a story that elaborates once again the interaction between two cultures. The protagonist is Ulka who has enjoyed not only a blissful childhood but also youth and is regarded as a blessed being and a mascot. When the opportunity for Greece visit appears before her, her good luck is once again affirmed. Ulka is excited and her mother shares the same joy and suggests that the children be left behind to which she agreed. Believing that the old folks were right in suggesting that the children be left to themselves for few months she plans her visit. All alone with her husband she basks in the glory of contentment and the majestic Greece fills her with new vigour:

After a decade of unmitigated marital bliss she still felt she was very lucky to have him love her. Well, perhaps not as much as she loved him, but a lot nevertheless. And he seemed to
love her more since they came to Greece, which was only natural, because here the air was like magic, the sea incredible, the food fit for the gods and the scent of sage and thymes perfumed even smog-choked city streets. (178)

The man- woman relationship which had become so intense in Greece now assimilated relationships about them to satiate their social self. Ulka meets Maria Aristides in a coffee shop where with formal greeting and complement friendship begins. Ulka also meets Maria’s brother Jack who intrudes into her privacy and this irritates Ulka who is not used to meeting strangers of the opposite sex. The cultural value, with which she is reared, collides with the culture she is transported into. Out of a sense of duty to her husband, the conventional image of the woman fills Ulka with a sense of intimidation.

Margaret Cozmack in her book The Hindu Woman writes.

... that the principle of the Vedas though in contradiction to the Laws of Manu, flows down through the epic times to the very present “The relationship between the husband and wife is still one of confidence, trust and joy.... Men and pure delight in their wives”. (325)

Ulka continues to be laid by Jack even though her inner self keeps on reminding her to rush away from the unpalatable situation. Here cultures are well constructed for what is offensive in one culture is acceptable in the other. Socializing with strangers is derogatory to the Sati
Savitri image of an Indian woman. The partners are more than biological mates and religious commitment is a necessary adjunct of marriage. Ulka is thereby indecisive in deciding the company of Jack. The cultural roots caution her and the civilization mode invites her. The truest obligation of a wife to maintain her purity is thereby at stake. The malicious intends of Jack alarms her but still she continues in order to realize fun in man-woman relationship outside the territory of marriage. Such is the bond of Hindu Marriage that Ulka's husband complements the blush on her face but does not correlate it to her first time attempted distrust. Denzil in a common mode shares what he finds interesting on his wife's face:

Denzil said, lifting a corner of his mouth, 'And is that why you have got a smile on your face like the tiger of Riga?' And he tilted her head back with one finger under her chin and kissed her in a preparatory sort of way. (186)

The closer of the novel makes the story interesting for Ulka is pleased with a momentary stray instead of a happy marital life and Denzil is pleased with the new look and as an expression of joy articulates kisses. The story here explores the mental makeup of women in the contemporary world and the sexual identity of Ulka becomes its literary energy. The story raises the questions like whether the current status of feminisms exists in Indian society too; the liberty that Ulka enjoys is not during her stay in India but during her migration to Greece. Therefore the representation of women through
Ulka could be regarded as Gauri Deshpande’s sincere effort for the elevation of women both as a life partner and living relation with considerable liberty. Here no weakness that is biologically female is discussed in relation to the portrayal of Ulka. Thereby Ulka becomes an epitome of what Mary Wallstonecraft in her book *A Vindication Of The Rights of Women* proposes:

I wish to persuade women to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them that the soft phrases susceptibility of heart delicacy of sentiments and refinement of taste are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness. (191)

The story *HABITS* is far more an intelligent story than those discussed earlier. Here the protagonist questions the utility of daily routine and debates the necessity of such a mental slavery. The quest to remain free even from a regular set of actions named as routine is explored through the psyche of the protagonist who after being deserted in love rationalises the cause of pain caused by sudden separation. The protagonist believes that the desertion was painful as she was in the habit of seeing and loving him regularly. The protagonist in order to safe guard herself from such a miserable hell as caused by rejection and denouncement takes a pledge not to fall into the trap of such a disastrous habit:

... I am thoroughly alarmed at the prospect of forming habit. Any habits. I gave up doing things punctually just so as not to fall into that
habit. I gave up many people that I liked because I didn’t want to get addicted to them. I married someone. I did not particularly care for — a person, moreover, whose job sent him out of town frequently. Even my children I loved only off and on. In short, I became a rather peculiar and unreliable sort of person. (189)

She avoided punctuality and regularity at work in order to escape the tyranny of habit. As a protest she neglected herself, avoided regular meals, personal hygiene and cleanliness and she made a mess of herself to look shabby in her skinny self. Because she was well educated, she was not denounced as abnormal. Soon her husband ran away leaving her along with her children to continue with her ‘strangeness’. Her new office colleague took pity on her and decided to re-do her personality. He willingly took over the task to look after her and gave a recognizable identity. Franz in his essay ‘The Process of Individuation’ explains this feature as:

... it is a process by which man lives out his innate human nature ... The process of individuation is real only if the individual is aware of it and consciously makes a living connection with it ... Man ... is able to participate consciously in his development He even feels that from time to time, by making free decision, he can cooperate actively with it. This co-operation belongs to the process of individuation (Critical Practice Vol.III, 163-164)
The protagonist realises that the intruder intends to take up the reins of life and wants to establish her autonomy in socially conformed ways. Realising that her non-conformity is at stake, she escapes not only talking to him but even coming face to face with him. As a result the intruder decides to have a long talk with her in order to make her conscious about her deplorable situation and shabby presence. He visited her during the absence of her kids and then during the stroll spoke to her with a well-rehearsed mind. He tersely spoke sense to her as:

... you don't seem to have a sense of identity, a sense of pride in yourself. (Dear me!) You have never asked yourself the questions: Who am I? What is my place in this world? What is my function? (Of course I don't ask myself such questions. What a waste of time asking oneself questions to which one hasn't got answers. Why not go to sleep instead?) Think about this: how would the world go on to people started to stay home just because they got bored with work? (Why does the world have to go on? Let it go to hell.) one must discipline oneself so as to be able in times of stress, to live on the strength of that discipline (why? one mostly manages to live on the strength of the fact that one is born.) (192-93)

No sooner the narrator learns that her determined colleague and neighbourer lives a time-bound routine life, she becomes alarmed and plans escapade. She sends a telegram to her sister saying “arriving tomorrow”.
Here the characters are extraordinary and deals with the theme of emotional loss and deprivation whereby it becomes touchingly human. The knowledge of the human psyche is convincingly worked out whereby the meaning has become intense and charming. Even though the story is funny, sad and compassionate, yet it makes a microscopic description of man in relation to his society.

From psyche to body is the transition as we move from HABITS TO BRAND NEW PINK NIKES. Once again body is given emphasis and the young and old generations are juxtaposed. The mother on the insistence of her daughter buys a swimsuit but the horror of stepping into it is far too much to imaging. She realizes that swimsuit would define all contours of flabby flesh and would project her as buxom. The cognition that she is old keeps away from trying the swimsuit so much so that she looks at her dull loose skinned and ageing body with a sense of unhappiness. Looking at the size of large black swimsuit she remembered her daughter’s laughing face who commented on the picked up stuff as “You might think you are about as large as King Kong, but you are only a size twelve after all” (196). The protagonist compares her age to that of her husband and finds that the bodily changes in him are hardly noticeable. She finds a little grey all over his body but had no paunch and no droops. In Tee- Shirt and Joggers he looked agile and alert. The protagonist wonders what could be a magical therapy for her personal wellness.

The story is all about health psychology. It is related to what is commonly recognized as “Biopsychosocial
strategy”. It relates optimal health incorporates physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, social and environmental aspects of one's life. Positive health behavior is what it contributes to the trends towards improved quality of life. This is a complete strategic achievement and has five phases. The narrator is identified as passing through all the stages in order to gain an impressive and healthy body:

\[\text{Precontemplation} \rightarrow \text{Contemplation} \rightarrow \text{Preparation} \rightarrow \text{Action} \rightarrow \text{Maintenance}\]

(Emotion, Stress, and Health, 447)

The narrator had never visualized old age for herself. To her Death and Old age were forlorn ideas. But no sooner she visualizes old age at her threshold, she decides to strive for her personal wellness so that her ageing is delayed. With this commitment to herself she pulls out her old shoes, tee-shirts and joggers and goes for a long run. The run had put her mind into an impulsive urge to measure her flab and imagine her renewed shape through exercising. This stage is 'Precontemplated Stage'. The contemplation stage is reached when the narrator religiously exercises in order to shed weight within a few days. The preparation starts when the runs begin and with the plan to buy a new pair of shoes. The maintenance stage is expected because the narrator at the close of the story pictures herself in the black swimsuit and realizes it would be too big for her size. This tickles her to laughter—an optimistic perspective about her wellness regime.
The narrator is preoccupied with effective exercise and measures what she was earlier and what she had become now. The day she took a vow, the seriousness could be noticed by those around her. Her optimism even made her responsive to her husband who was surprised by the biological approach. The carnal pleasure reflected her good mood and the narrator imagined the state of a husband who fondles her loose skinned body. She sympathises with him and appreciates his heroism in maintaining the mirth of living together:

Oh, poor, sweet man; with his endless tact, a kind of an absent-minded gallantry and cheerful familiarity that allowed him to love and cherish her year after year, not minding that she was getting so endlessly old and crumbly. (204)

The narrator wished she could express her admiration as well as pity and sorrow towards her husband who did every thing to be her strength and support to life. On returning home after a long session of vigorous running she found her husband appeased with her stress to cut flab and suggested that she buy a pair of pink shorts along with the new ‘Nikes’.

The story is about conjugality, which contains love, care and esteem for each other. The story ends on a note of self re-enforcement, which is a product of her husband’s tangible and informational support. These two kinds of support identified here in the text are essential for effective adjustment.
THE DEBT is again a story about cultural interaction. The Debt makes a sensitive treatment of this theme. Inter-racial marriage explores the efficacy of marriages that transcends geographical bound. The Indian protagonist Sajan Singh marries Anita but soon the conjugality is disrupted for all times as Sajan Singh is killed in a road accident. The Debt is also about gender relations. It explores the social self of Anita an American girl who while studying in Berkeley comes in contact with Sajan Singh and soon they marry to complete their togetherness. At the early phase of marriage Anita finds herself pregnant and because she is mentally not prepared for motherhood she decides abortion against the wish of Sajan Singh. Before the pregnancy could be terminated Sajan Singh dies accidentally and Anita jolted by the strange way of fate, suspends the abortion for the time period. But abortion is suspended for all times as the foetus has grown to the period of such weeks that termination could be fatal to Anita's life. Consequently Peter Robert Singh is born much against her wish.

Anita also receives along with the child a substantial insurance money and decides to visit Sajan's father in Rurkee. Anita's travel to Rurkee has not been an easy move. She had this relief that her arrival to India would give a part of the compensation to the heirs where by they would live comfortably. She realizes the plight of her father-in-law when even strangers sympathized with him for his loss:
Oh ho ho! So you are Doctor-sahib's daughter-in-law? Poor fellow, how many calamities can fall to one man's lot? Is this his grand son? Good, good. It seems you have come to look after him? At last now he might recover after seeing his grand son... ‘Are’ ‘re’ ‘re’ re! So that's why Doctor-sahib is so sick! What a fate! Even the promising son had to die! And this poor child is now without a father!" (100)

She wondered why there were so many exclamations of sorrow and why every one sounded philosophical at the mention of the doctor's name. Anita found Bishambhar Singh a withered and emaciated clump of flesh with grey beard and head nearly bald. Her face was distorted in shape after a stroke and Anita wondered as to whether Sajan’s death had caused the havoc there. Anita was given a room to stay but the dirt around made her dizzy and queasy. The strong stench spread everywhere made Anita wonder how she would survive even for hour in such a place. The world around made her gas and choke for she could not imagine her son put up in this filth and dirt around. She wondered at the life around and also questioned her self:

What am I doing here? Who are these people? who is the woman who brought me lunch? Could she be Sajan’s sister? No, if she were Sajan’s sister, she would have sat with me, she would have cuddled Peter. Why do these
strangers, these neighbors attend to Bishambhar Singh? Isn’t there anyone else? (108)

The filth around is as deplorable as the strange ways of the people around. The incident of a donkey hit by a speeding truck, fills her with dismay. For the donkey wreathes in pain surrounded on all side by curious passers-by. The face of the humanity in the world of spirituality adds to her wonder. She has enough surprises one by one. When she offers a part of compensation for Sajan’s accidental death, the aloofness of Dr. Bishambhar Singh makes Anita contemplate on the quality of bond that existed between the father and the Son:

If this father had taken the trouble to come close to his son in his childhood and youth, he would have come back inspite of her. But how often did a sense of duty prevail over an American wife, American job, American money and American life? Relationships based only on a sense of duty are no relationship at all? (112)

The distal relationship between Bishambhar and Sajan is matter of surprise to Anita for she looks at this through a mother vision. A mother’s vision is a product of proximal relationship and the narrator has contrasted the two vision in order to delineate the authority of both the roles of a mother and a father. Jane Tom Kins in her essay ‘Me and My Shadow’ speaks about this feature as:

... The essential gesture of a father tongue is not reasoning but distancing – making a gap, a space between the subject or self and the object
or other... Everywhere now everybody speaks [this] language in laboratories and government buildings and headquarters and offices of business... The father tongue is spoken from above. It goes one way. Answer is expected or heard... The mother tongue spoken or written, expects an answer. It is conversation, a word the root of which means 'turning together'. The mother tongue is language not as mere communication but as relation, relationship. It connects... Its power is not in dividing but in binding (Feminisms, 1107)

The displacement of Sajan in terms of human, cultural feature and relations shows now quite clearly when Anita labels the mode of upbringing as its prime factor. She questions the attitude of Bishambhar in her own introspection as “why talk of duty? Did you take any trouble to be the sort of father a son would want to take care of? But she kept quiet.” (113)

She concludes that Sajan was not a part of a family but only a support structure. There were no affectional ties between the inmates and relativeness was only in terms of role-playing. Bishambhar answers that the offsprings hold a debt towards their parents in terms of survival, shocks, Anita, for she had expected “praise from the old man for his own thoughtfulness and perhaps her gratitude.” (114) The old man in a matter of fact tone instructs Anita to go back to America the very next day but Anita was terribly exhausted in finding the reason of
resentment against Sajan and his family. Anita could now read in between lines and she held her analysis as:

Sajan could not understand a father who would not put his children, his comfort, even his life ahead of paying his debt to these poor people; and his father could not understand Sajan who wanted to spend his short life in the warmth of a little love, a little luxury, paying his dept to himself in the world before leaving it. In the end there remained between the two but this check... (116)

The problem arose out of Bishambhar Singh projecting himself as fatherhood- a supreme cultural courtesy and the proximity between he and his son Sajan was not natural but cultivated under material conditions. The feeling of kinship was not cultivated on the vibes of humanity but only on estrangement for reasons of exchange and domination.
WORKS CITED


