Chapter –III

PSYCHOANALYSIS OF DESHPANDE'S WOMEN'S

As a novelist, Deshpande has deep insight into the subtleties of human mind and society confined in an unpretentious style, the labyrinthine tread and the labyrinthine tracts of human psyche and creditably represent it in fiction. Her major novels - particularly That Long Silence, The Dark Holds No Terrors, Roots and Shadows & The Binding Vine deal with the psychology of the characters who lose their capacity for rational thought on being subjected to traumatic experiences. The present chapter attempts to analyse the psychic process of Deshpande's heroines.

Jaya of That Long Silence while facing traumatic situation temporarily seeks shelter in neurosis and escapes from responsibilities and difficulties of life unknowingly. This makes her to study inner self and thereby she gains self confidence and inner power to cope with the problems of life. She became victorious and to some extent makes compromise with the problems of life where as in the earlier phase she lacked this power of accommodation and broadness of outlook.

Jaya Kulkarni has suppressed other aspects of her personality such as writing career and her friendship or association with Kamat for bading a fully satisfied life of a house - wife. She is fully satisfied in her domestic life because
she is married with Mohan, a responsible man. She has all kinds of domestic comforts blessed with two children, Rahul and Rati. But for achieving domestic happiness, she has sacrificed personal ambitions.

Jaya has been a short story writer and her husband is proud of it but he objects to the themes of stories which are full of autobiographical overtones. At one occasion he says:

"They will all know now, all those people who read this and know us, they will know that these two persons are us, they will think I am this kind of man, they will think I am this man. How can I look anyone in the face again? And you, how could you write these things .... "

She however feels that she has related her experience only after transmuting it into something entirely different but she has been " sacred of hurting Mohan, sacred of jeopardising the only career I had, my marriage " (144). She decides to give up writing fiction and settles down to write to newspapers.

Kamat exists in the novel as a shadowy figure. He is a different sort of man. He takes interest in cooking too. He is quite objective and clear hearted man. He feels ease in the company of women. Jaya's attachment to him is not platonic but it is also not a full fledged affair. He find a very interesting quality of treating her or others as an equal. He is very open man while others put on masks. Therefore that endeared him to her, she particularly notes his treatment of her as an equal while every man she meets puts on a different face and a false smile, making his condescension all too palpable, with Kamat she comes into herself.
"It had been a revelation to me that two people, a man and a woman, could talk this way. With this man, I had not been a woman. I had been just myself - Jaya" (TLS:153).

Inspite of the "so asexual" nature of their relationship, she is unable to know how to address him. But she gets from Kamat the best of her father's concern. She finds fatherly concern of reassurance and comfort and the best of attention which she would like to have from Mohan. Whenever she is wrong, he can scold like her father.

"I'm warning you - beware of this "women are the victims" theory of yours. It'll drag you down into a soft, squishy bog of self-pity. Take yourself seriously, woman. Don't skulk behind a false name" (TLS:148).

She is encouraged by Kamat like an elder: "spew out your anger in your writing, woman spew it out." (147). And she is complimented by him like a lover: "your name is like your face"(152). She believes in him things which she would not like to mention to Mohan. She always seeks solace in Kamat when one of her stories is rejected by many editors. After her father Appa's death. She is consoled by Kamat and it becomes difficult for her to distinguish between him and Appa. Her body responds to his gentle look, voice and touch but the image of her husband clash with her ego and she remunerates her experience.

"There had been nothing but an overwhelming urge to respond to him with my body, the equally overwhelming certainty of my mind that I could not do so. Later, there had been confusion" (TLS:157).
But she rejects the urge - in the interest of her conjugal happiness and intentionally excites Mohan and loves him animaly to displace Kamat from her mind. She thinks that man - woman relation within the boundaries of marriage, is dictated by betrayal, and deceit, but such kind of pretence is necessary for cover up. This realization on her part makes her callously on the death of Kamat.

"That night, while having dinner, I had thought, someone I know is dead, I saw him Dead and I had been detached from that woman who had seen him, remote from that experience" (TLS: 157).

She has given up not only for writing and Kamat for the safety of her married life but she has dissociated and alienated herself from everything and everybody from wherever any kind of threat seemed looming to the peace of her home. Her awareness and extreme care for the safety of her home and children has been concetised by Deshpande in the well-known childhood bed-time story of the wise sparrow who built a house of wax and the foolish crow who built hers of dung. Crows house collapses on a rainy night compelling her to take her shelter in sparrow's house. The sparrow is so possessive and attatched to her home. Crow is drenched and she is guided to warm herself on the hot pan. The foolish crow hops on to it and gets burnt to death.

Jaya's married life has been lived almost on the lines as sparrow's. She has built an edifice of security around her husband and children believing it to be a burrow into which she can crawl, reptile like, and feel safe (148). Attending to the
needs of the husband and tending and caring for the children become her full-time occupation. She states in unequivocal terms that Mohan is her profession, career and means of livelihood (75) and as Kamat points out she derives a strange satisfaction in making him dependent on her. Unconsciously following her aunt's advice to treat her husband as a "sheltering tree" she, like Gandhari of the Mahabharata symbolically bandages her eyes and grows blind to his weakness. Like Sita who followed her husband into exile, she follows Mohan into the concrete jungle that is Bombay (11). Once there, like a faithful wife she takes to wearing huge dark glasses, gets her eyebrows shaped and hair cut short to look exactly like the wife of an executive. In the process she becomes dwarfed and annihilated as an individual but it all goes unnoticed even by herself. Perhaps she feels incomplete without the company of her husband and children. Her thirst for family life compels her to come to terms with her circumstances. Her protest, largely unconscious, remains wrapped in an uneasy wordlessness finding its occasional expression in such acts as her adamant patronage of Kusum, whose feeble mindedness she seems to borrow for a while.

Her absorption into the family fold is so fatal that from a fiercely independent girl she gradually deteriorates into the "stereotype of a woman: nervous, incompetent, needing male help and support"(76). The thoughts of the collapse of marriage, particularly those relating to the possibility of Mohan's death, keep constantly haunting her:
"I had lived in constant panic that he would die. I had clung to him at night, feeling with relief the warmth of his body, stroking his chest, letting my palms move with this even deep breaths. The thought of living without him had twisted my insides, his death had seemed to me the final catastrophe. The very idea of his dying has made me feel so bereft that years had flowed effortlessly down my checks. If he had been a little late coming home, I had been sure he was dead. By the time he returned, I had, in my imagination, shaped my life to a desolate widowhood" (TLS: 96-97).

In fact, apprehension of disaster has always been active in the depths of her unconscious. She quite often wonders why it is that "Wars always took place in other countries, tidal waves and earthquakes occurred in far-off, unknown places, that murder, adultery and heroism had their places in other people's lives, never in ours?" (4). And the disaster does take place in her life in the shape of a serious threat to her much prized and carefully built marriage and its temple, home.

Mohan gets involved in a shady deal and consequently faces enquiry into charges of corruption. If the enquiry is carried on he will stand every possibility of losing his well-paid job which will mean terribly insecurity. Jaya is at once reminded of the army wives, Mohan told her about, who were reduced to destitution on their husband's being thrown out of jobs and arrested later. In the Indian context it is instructive to understand why Mohan has resorted to corrupt means of making money. Sudhir Kakkar views that super-ego, the moral agency, is weakly differentiated and insufficiently
idealised in Indians. Whereas in the west an individual's behaviour is constantly regulated by the proscriptions of the super - ego, in a Hindu it is regulated by what he calls "communal conscience ". He explains that communal conscience which compromises family and 'jati' norms "is a social rather than an individual formation: it is not 'inside' the psyche. In other words, instead of having one internal sentinel an Indian relies on many external 'watchmen' to patrol his activities and especially his relationships in all the social hierarchies". This creates a situation in which clandestine infringement of moral and social norms is a thing not to be much worried about. In this light "dishonesty, nepotism and corruption as they are understood in the West are merely abstract concepts" for an Indian. It is the primacy of relationships that pervades through the life of an average Indian rather than primacy of healthy social values.

Mohan is by no means an exception. He has been a dutiful son, in spite of the inhuman treatment meted out to him by his father and by extension he is a dutiful husband. He regularly sends money to his family and makes it a point to attend the death anniversary of his father every year and even bears the entire expenditure of it. While working at Lohanagar as a small time engineer he makes himself a scapegoat in the corrupt deals of the CE for securing spacious living quarters for his family. And after moving to Bombay, encouraged by his colleague Agarwal, accepts illegal gratification again so that his family might live in comfort and his children might attend good schools. He says:

93
"It was for you and the children that I did this. I wanted you to have a good life, I wanted the children to have all those things I never had" (TLS:9).

They move from their posh Churchgate house to the small flat in Dadar to evade the enquiry. Mohan takes the misfortune in his stride. At the most, in an apparent case of "projection" accuses Jaya of being indifferent (116) and storms out of the house.

To Jaya the experience turns out to be traumatic. The insecurity caused by the possibility of Mohan's losing his job, his subsequent disappearance coupled with the running away of her son who has been vacationing with their family friends, Rupa and Ashok, comes as a terrifying prospect to her. The carefully built sparrow-house appears to be cracked and the insides cruelly exposed.

"It was like a house collapse during the monsoon. There was something desolating about the ease with which that had seemed so substantial fell away, almost contemptuously leaving behind an embarrassing nakedness" (TLS:174).

This realisation hits her with the force of a bolt striking a tende tree. As has been pointed out earlier she has been expecting something, woeful to befall her and consciously welcomes it now:

"......there had been for me that other waiting ...... Waiting fearfully for disaster, for a catastrophe. I always had this feeling - that if I have escaped it today, it's still there round the corner waiting for me; the locked door, the empty
house, the messenger of doom bringing news of death. With Mohan's confession, I was actually relieved. Here it was at last - my disaster. No more waiting, no more apprehension, no more fears (TLS:30).

Yet the conscious bravado does not sustain at the unconscious level. She therefore cringes, and unable like Savitri of the myth[ with whom she fondly compares herself (11) ] to dog her husband's tormenters, neurotically breaks into a dialogue with herself subjecting everything that matters to her in life to minute analysis perhaps in the spirit of Yajniavalkya's scholarly wife Maitreyee (with whom too she compares herself at several places ). Like Virginia Woolf and Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande is also a prose rhapsodist of sentiments, feelings and emotions passing, through human consciousness. In her novels, the protagonist is in a pursuit of self- knowledge and ultimately finds her own individual identity.

She considers, like a rational individual, several options for dealing with the crisis such as suicide (11) and plain confession of the crime (31) and dismisses them all as impracticable and ultimately lets her psyche take its own measures to manage the crises. She lives several days in a traumatic state. Her thoughts go back and forth in time triggered by the slightest provocation but constantly return to the traumatic event. Traumatic neurosis is usually a result of an emotional shock wherein the subject feels his life threatened. Sometimes it acts as a precipitating factor and reveals an already exiting neurotic structure. But mostly it
manifests itself, in cases where the trauma is a decisive factor in itself, in the form of symptoms, that incessantly strive to "bind" and abreact the traumatic experience. On account of the low level of tolerance that Jaya is bestowed with, an earlier traumatic experience, that of her father Appa's sudden death, is precipitated by the present exceptionally intense stimulus. Both have shattered her equilibrium. Appa meant a great deal for her and his death was premature and sudden and it occurred at a crucial time in her life, when she was writing her school final examinations. His death rendered Jaya's family homeless and left her bereft of an emotional support. But at that time, although she took seriously ill, the comforting hand of her elder brother saved her from further psychic crisis. The present loss of her second home which she has so carefully nurtured, apart from being of traumatic proportions, comes as a repetition of it. But now there is none whom she can turn to, not even Kamat. She is required to grapple with the trauma all by herself even if it means an upset of her equilibrium and emotional poise and it must be said to her credit that she emerges triumphant, crowned with a new understanding of herself and the world, at the end.

The partial relaxation of the ego's control over the working of her psyche, during this period, gives her a changed perspective of the nature of things and human relationships. The most important of them is a free play to the super-ego which can be equally disastrous as the id when not properly managed by the ego. After experiencing the trauma Jaya seems to become at once excessively concerned about the
moral side of what she has done so far and what she should have done but did not. Freud observes in this regard that;

“ill luck - that is, external frustration - so greatly enhances the power of the conscience in the super-ego. As long as things go well with a man, his conscience is lenient and lets the ego do all sorts of things; but when misfortunes befalls him, he searches his soul, acknowledge his sinfulness, heightens the demands of his conscience, imposes abstinences on himself and punishes himself with penances”.4

Indeed Jaya pours out, during her neurotic spell, her innermost thoughts and makes an unqualified confession of her "sinful" acts which she never confided in Mohan again for fear of jeopardising marital security. She feels freshly guilty about her clandestine fictional endeavour:

"I had written even after that confrontation with him (145). It hadn't been Mohan's fault at all. And it had been just a coincidence, though it has helped, that just then Mohan had propelled me into that other kind of writing". (TLS :148).

Her soul - searching, occasioned by the enforced leisure and coupled with a neurotic spell, makes her dig into the long forgotten past and feel sorry for such things as the third child which she has not let live. With the help of her brother she happened to secretly terminate her third pregnancy. She now comes to think about it as her "great act of treachery against Mohan"(130). As she probes deep into this significant event of her life the guilt feelings assume greater sharpness and poignancy.
"But now, as if it has been waiting for its cue all these years, a shadowy figure in the wings, guilt sprang out at me. I thought of the unborn child with dread and a piercing sorrow. I invested her - yes, it would have been a girl - with all the qualities I missed in Rahul and Rati" (TLS: 131).

Jaya is almost convinced at a point that the misfortune that had suddenly engulfed her family is entirely of her making of her failure as a wife and mother (185).

Apart from the unusual activation of the punitive elements of the super-ego Jaya's psyche sets a wide variety of painful reactions in motion - something which is very much characteristic of traumatic neurosis - to naturalise and bind the flood of mobile instinctual energy. Rumination on the traumatic event, insomnia and recurrent nightmares and dreams, feelings of detachment and disorientation, adverse somatic reaction and relative lack of control over one's actions are the readily available tools of the psychic apparatus which are pressed into service in Jaya's case. Everyone of the defence strategies that Jaya resorts to, emanates from, is structured around and finally returns to the single traumatic event of the sudden disintegration of her conjugal life.

Shashi Deshpande's use of dreams as a literary device, comparable to that of Graham Greene in their subtlety and pointedness, allows her to describe in symbolic and artistic terms the reality about the life of her heroines. The partial relaxation of the ego's control during sleep enables the dream-work to symbolically present the unconscious motivations of the dreamer. Consciously Jaya tries to explain to herself her
and Mohan's fugitive status in terms of the slightly bizarre image of village women hiding only their heads when found casing in the open. But in her nightmares and dreams her desolate helplessness comes more poignantly alive. Jaya's first nightmare, coming as it does at a crucial turning point in her neurotic reaction, reveals many conflicting tendencies within her. In the dream she sees Mohan and herself walking together. Soon she is left behind, and for some reason, has to pass through a house. She is helped into the house by a girl. Once she is in, she realises with shock that she is alone, fears that she will not be able to find Mohan anymore. She is then led into a room where a number of girls are present. Although she feels that they are on her side none of them comes forward to help her. She feels ill and utterly helpless, and lies down like a corpse. The girls around her discuss her predicament in low tones. Not much later however, Mohan appears on the scene and asks her to hasten to a waiting taxi. But as she runs after him she realises:

"That it is too late anyway, we will never be able to make it, we will never be able to get away, it is all my fault, all my fault..." (TLS: 86).

The dream presents, in a classic case of condensation and displacement, her entire marital experience, her present predicament and her unconscious wishes. The house she passes through is the martial edifice. She is led into it by society. Once, she is inside the house, no help comes forth. She has to make a home herself. She does not even understand Mohan fully. And then comes the catastrophe of
the enquiry into the charge of corruption. Society, which she has thought to be on her side suddenly turns hostile. Her degradation is discussed by everyone. She fervently wishes to get away from her present predicament.

Tradition has it that a wife should seek her husband's help. And so Mohan appears there with a taxi. But her belief in Mohan’s ability of deliverance is not strong enough to blissfully give herself into his care. She therefore thinks again that it is very late, the escape route is closed. She finds fault with herself because she is unable to do anything to help Mohan in his hour of need except neurotically rave and grieve.

While Jaya's first dream is a sort of wish-fulfillment, her second dream, occurring much later, is expressive of her utter frustration. By now Mohan has deserted her and she has already borne the resultant additional psychic conflict. She experiences a stab of anguish whenever her servant-maid, Nayana, makes a direct reference to her unenviable plight. It is at that specific point that Jaya recounts her "crazy recurrent dream".

"I was looking for a toilet, I was desperate, I had to find one I'd disgrace myself if I didn't find at once. And yes, there it was – the immense relief, and then the overpowering shame as I realized I was in a public place surrounded by people staring at me steadily and silently". (TLS:161)

Jaya and Mohan have hoped to escape publicity by moving to the Dadar flat. That such a thing is not possible is evidenced by Jaya’s dream. She unconsciously perceives what
is at the back of the mind of most of their acquaintance and it comes alive in the dream.

Feelings of detachment from the self, experience of split personality and a sense of disorientation too are expressive of neurotic conflict. The seeds of a split personality have always been present throughout her seventeen year old married life. Her name was changed to Suhasini by her in laws soon after marriage. Ever since , “Suhasini” has been her marital identity. Now that his identity is in crisis she feels disorientated. On a secret visit to her posh churchgate house, to which her marital identity has been almost fixed, she sees her divided self clearly.

“And now thing seemed to connect me to this place, nothing bridged the chasm between this prowling woman and the woman who had lived here. I was conscious of a faint chagrin at her disappearance. Wasn’t it I had painfully, laboriously created her? Perhaps, for that that very reason, she could not evade me entirely, and she appeared to me, only a faint wraith of herself, standing near this table, hand poised over a vase of flowers” (TLS:168).

As her conflict reaches climacteric proportions she makes an even more frank admission of “a feeling of total disorientation”(177) and experiences detachment “from everything” even from her “own body” (177). While on one hand Jaya's psyche reaches almost the point of total disintegration under the intense pressure and force of adverse circumstances, deep within her, involuntarily again, a defence process is also set in motion.
Dreams, neurosis and all the other aspects we have discussed so far, themselves are basically defensive in nature. Another defence device that comes handy to Jaya, partially aided by her experience as a writer, is her reliving, at every point, in her imagination of the significant moments of her not short life. The exercise helps her above anything else, to come to grips with the reality as it presents itself. It is in this context that the stream of consciousness technique adopted in the novel, is artistically most gratifying. A smooth linear development of the narrative would not have facilitated the to and for movement in time of Jaya’s consciousness. Jaya’s unfolding of her story in bits and pieces, moving back and forth with remarkable felicity, borders on the incoherent, necessitating the stream of consciousness technique. Shashi Deshpande’s use of the technique reminds us of Dorothy Richardson of pilgrimage in that there is a significant assertion of authorial voice and autobiographical undercurrents, of Virginia Woolf of The Waves in that both are concerned with private visions of life and private symbols in presenting character which never succeeds in becoming typical, and also of James Joyce of Ulysses in that the disparity between man’s aspirations and actual achievements gave a comic vision to Joyce, whereas for Deshpande a tragic resignation and a conscious, not spontaneous, reconciliation with the world.

The technique has been very effectively used by the author to reveal the psychic being of Jaya, of what she is
rather than what she does. In conclusion, it may be observed that the exigencies of life presented themselves in the form of traumatic events to Jaya. Her psyche has not been well-equipped to meet them. As a result the flood-gates of anxiety have been suddenly opened and at this psychological moment irrationality qualified her response to the situation. However, soon she has mustered up enough inner strength to stage a return to normalcy. The experience has provided her with and ideal occasion for growing introspective and thus make important discoveries about herself and redefine her relation with the world. The hamartia of Deshpande's women's is their superior (?) intelligence. Intoxicated by a few successes, they feel themselves wiser than their parents, though ironically, their own children prove how misplaced their confidence had been all the while. They pretend to be normal, even in abnormal circumstances such as the death of an infant daughter. They refuse to admit their failures to their parents because that would hurt their ego. And all the time they go on pretending that their marriages have been successful whereas, as predicted by their parents before the plunge, they proved to be fiasco. In fact, if they are outside the mental asylum, credit must go to their respective husbands who, at all crucial occasions swallowed the bitter pill and acted wisely. The process of self-deception and Narcissism turn their children hostile to them and ultimately some events convince them of the absurdity of their approach to life. In The Binding Vine, for example, it is the unlettered Sakutai, who acquires poise and equilibrium in spite of two tragedies that befell her, makes
Urmi realise: "I found her getting on with her chores. You can never opt out, you can never lay it down, the burden of belonging to the human race" (BV:202).

It is during such a process of discovery to which these women's stumble that they regain confidence in themselves and instead of seeking an escape they decide to face the facts squarely. Long had they remained "enclosed behind walls of negation" (DT:197). As Saru's father advised, "Don't turn your back on things again. Turn round and look at them." Now she realizes:

"..... all those selves she had rejected so resolutely at first, and so passionately embraced later. The guilty sister, the undutiful daughter, the unloving wife..... she had to accept these selves to become whole again.... If I have been a puppet it is because I made myself one .... I have been afraid of proving my mother right ... But I have been my own enemy" (DT:201).

These women carry the burden of their own overblown ego right from their early childhood. Whether they are reared as an ignored sibling or as a pampered child, they grow with complexes, over conscious 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 relationship - Kamala - Sarita - Renu (DT); Inni - Urmi / Vanna - 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. Kamala repeatedly asks Sarita, who refuses to answer her:

"You mean you want to become a doctor?" I did not reply, I would not answer ... "Where's the college?" Again I ignored her and spoke to him [father]: "I'm not talking to you. I'm not asking you for anything ... you don't want me to have anything, you don't want me to do anything. You don't even want me to live .....". I hated her. I wanted to hurt her, wound her, make her suffer" (DT: 128).

The antagonisms assumes such an irrevocable turn that the mother refuses to remember the daughter in the last hours of her life:

"She cursed me as no mother should" Yes, to be as adamant as that ! ...... To be so unforgiving to your own daughter ... your only child!"(Dt: 21).

In The Binding Vine the skirmishes are frequent between all the pairs of mothers and daughters:

"No, she's laughing at me. You're always making fun of me. You're cruel, I'll never talk to you again, never, never in my life" [Mandira to Vanna] (31).

Again the lava the daughter stores in her heart against her mother, erupts:

"Mandira hates me" (74) "Did you see how carefully she avoided saying anything to me when she left ? The little chit she does it deliberately, she knows she can hurt me " (74).
Kalpana holds her mother responsible for her father's infatuation with another woman:
"..... when he left me for that woman, she was angry with me ..... she was furious with me. You drove him away ...... you're always angry , always quarrelling , that's why he is gone " (93).

The result of such hostility is bound to get reflected in children. Renu, who is only nine, resorts to silence and withdrawal:
"She stares at me critically at times, a cold shrewd, objective observer behind those little girl's eyes of hers ... she reminds me of a room whose doors are closed. Nothing emerges, neither her joys nor her sorrows " (DT :28).

We have seen how Mandira has grown . In addition, we find Kartik also acquiring " adult " outlook while a child :
"There is something curiously adult about him as he does these things. Was he always so serious? (68).

"Inni ", I say gently, 'I' m sorry, I'm really sorry I shouted at you" (68). " I'm sorry, Kartik, I lost my temper ".
" Did you say sorry to Inni?" (39).

The last sentence shows how mature he has become witnessing such tantrums in his mother .

In India there has been no dearth of women who would suffer indignities, humiliation and torture as meek victims. Shashi Deshpande has only contempt for such "stupid, silly martyrs... idiotic women's " (DT ;98). But if it is because they suffered like Akka (in RS) or Sulumaushi and Sakubai (in
we find the family bond intact. They had resigned their destinies to fate succumbing to philisophy. "And these women ...... I don't know if you can really call them weak. They have an inner strength we know very little of" (RS :6) . But education fills the "new" woman with a volcanic steam to disown even womanhood. The very idea of being a woman and then becoming a mother is so disgusting to them:

"I am a dark, damp, smelly hole ..." (DT :25). "And it became something shameful, this growing up, so that you had to be ashamed of yourself, even in the presence of your own father " (DT: 55).

" And that had been my introduction to the beautiful world of being a woman . I was unclean " (RS :79).

"I resented womanhood because it closed so many doors to me. "Because of this attitude towards their sex, they inevitably, look upon marriage as an institution of torture and slavery, little realising that " husband , thank God, [could be] a decent man ". "A trap? or a cage ?....a cage ? with two trapped animals glaring hatred at each other " (RS :61) .They feel that they have to suffer due to "punishment " and "have to pay for all those saris and jewels" (RS: 70) This attitude darkens their vision to such an extent that they view the ' conjugal bliss' as rape . Sarita (in DT) and Mira (in BV) have this morbid attitude:

"....... fearing the coming of the dark - clouded, engulfing night " (BV : 66)

"...... Savage reality of a monstrous onslaught" (DT :9).
".......Monstrous invasion of my body pinioned to a position of object surrender " (DT:10).

An obvious corollary to this attitude is their hatred for motherhood:

" They brain wash us into this motherhood "(BV:76).

" They miracle of motherhood ... after a day - long struggle she had felt through a haze of pain and shock .... she had been outraged at the indignity of it. Her posture, her grunts, her cries, the pain which made an animal out of her ... was this the prelude to motherhood?" (DT:146-147).

The morbidity is further expressed through the similies / analogies they summon on different occasions. A woman in her 'devotional' trance is compared to a "crescendo of excitement during intercourse" (DT:93). A suckling baby generates "erotic response" (147) and the puja - room, gives her "antispectic look of a toilet" (RS:19). And still the women's believe that "Men's minds are like public lavatories full of dirty pictures" (BV:182). The women whom they label "martyrs women's or just stupid fools" (RS:67) have a better perception of their own selves. Mini, Indu's cousin, for example, sees her problem in the proper light:

"I had found Mini an enigma .... was she really one ?Or , did the sphinxlike silence conceal nothing?" (RS:122).

Later she realises that " ...... you can no more move out of your cage no choices" (125):

"...... eternal female ....as she became in the process of adapting herself to her circumstances and environment "(RS:132).
The result of such psychosis culminates in turning normal women into neurotic ones. They are afraid to step out of their room lest they should appear "not fragmented and torn but whole ..... the aches, the bruises, had disappeared " (DT : 76)." ..... she would carry this ugly, unbearable burden until she died . The facade of deception had cracked ...."(DT : 193).

" Showing off I just showing off !I liked to imagine myself a daredevil " (RS :103).

" Had I not created my own torment ? " (RS :186).

Shashi Deshpande, it may be remembered, is disgusted at the label of a feminist glued to her. In her interview to Ashvini Sarpeshkar - Tondon she declared:

" I do not like to be branded this or that because life is more complex than that . My enduring concern is for human relationships. I certainly do not think my novels are a man vs woman issue at all "5.

If she has portrayed abnormal women she has depicted well adjusted males as well. In fact, the husband in these novels are quite mature, rational and insightful. They are not only compassionate towards them, they swallow their pride and take initiative in restoring normalcy to them. Sarita and Indu found their husbands heroes when they decided to marry persons of other castes or of lower economic / social status . They were ecstatic in the early years of their marriage . The cracks appeared with time though the heroines ascribed silly reasons for the loss of warmth in their relationships. Let us try to see how they stand in the eyes of their wives and why their cordiality atrophied :

109
"I became in an instant a physically aroused woman, with an infinite capacity for loving and giving, with a passionate desire to be absorbed by the man I loved" (DT: 34).

"That I can never be complete in myself. Until I had met Jayant I had not known it .... that there was somewhere outside me a part of me without which I remained incomplete. Then I met Jayant. And lost the ability to be alone" (RS: 31). Each time you leave me, the parting is like death" (BV: 138).

Despite such intensity of admiration and love, Sarita feels that she was being "raped" by her husband and that it was not love making but onslaught. Manu was reminded by an interviewer that his wife earned not only the butter but the bread as well (DT: 30). His job as a college teacher or as a free lance writer is regarded something trivial. This marginalisation from the centre to the periphery is reinforced further when tenants of the chawl begin to attach more importance to her because of her profession than to him. Since he does not publicity create a scene by quarrelling either with Boozie or with Sarita he said to like a "pimp"," And there was perversely no relief in me, but contempt that he did not" (DT: 84).

His solicitous enquiry about bruises on her body may not be hypocritical.

"God, Saru! Have you hurt yourself? Look at that! "I can swear his suspense, his concern was genuine (DT:185).

She regards him a divided person, a case of schizophrenia:
"Was it possible for a man to dissemble so much? The violent stranger of the night..... and now this. Am I crazy or is he? Can a man be so divided in himself" (DT : 91).

The fact she acknowledges much later is that he is not a divided person but a well adjusted person: it is Sarita who is a "two - in - one woman" (DT : 121). If Sarita could discover that Boozie was only showing off as a womaniser, why couldn't Manohar? Why should he be denied that much of intelligence? Her transitory infatuation with Padmakar is a defence mechanism:

"I had imagined it would give me an escape route..... that would lead me out of my loveless trap...solution for a woman who found no happiness with one man to try and find it in another " (DT : 120).

Not only Padmakar but also Madhav is within her contemplation of seduction: "But now she thought, look at Madhav, if I imagined that by sleeping with you, I could cure myself, would I not try to seduce? " (DT :135).

"Let us turn now to Indu. What is wrong with Jayant? Indu says: " .... as if the lens has misted over, obscuring my vision, it was not Naren but Jayant; Jayant whom I wanted and in the same moment, hated for wanting him so much " (RS : 151).

What a subtle explanation to defend one's infidelity! She starts hating her husband and turns to adultery with the feeling : " But I had committed no crime " (154) Her so- called devotion to Jayant was not genuine.
What, then, had I achieved by giving him [Naren] my body? Apart from wronging Jayant? Wronging Jayant?......

But had I not wronged Jayant even before this? By pretending, by giving him a spurious coin... I had treated him of my true self. That I thought is dishonourable, dishonest, much more than this, what I have done with Naren" (RS: 171).

And what is this pretension for? Just to soothe a male ego:

"..... it shocks him to find passion in a woman. It puts him off. I have learnt my lesson now. And so I pretend. I'm passive. And unresponsive" (RS: 83).

Similarly, Urmic has her own temptations. When Bhaskar approaches her with unambiguous intentions, inspite of warning by Vanna and Inni, she drifts towards him contemplating.

"That this, responding to Bhaskar, is the only way of realizing the mushy adolescent with her dreams of living happily even after with Kishore, who's trapped inside me....." (RS: 165-66). The arrested adolescent desire finds a release in adultery.

Thus thematically as well as ideological, Shashi Deshpande's novels have a kind of continuity. From the point of view of intertextuality we find not only traces of one novel in the other but also obvious repetitions. As in the Bombay films, the same story seems to be recounted with different names and permutations and combinations. We have already seen how the three heroines share the same traits. They married
outside the caste and persons of lower financial / social status and had to leave the parental house in protest or disgust. Out of the three heroines, two have antagonism against their mothers and the third Indu of RS lost her mother at the time of her birth, Sarita and Urmi have doting fathers who support them much to the dismay of their respective mothers. Indu's father is a wanderer appearing on the scene unexpectedly. All are educated pursuing some career and are slightly better placed than their respective husbands. While two of the heroines have two children each the third is postponing maternity for financial reasons. If Renu is serious in The Dark Holds No Terrors, Kartik is sober and adult in The Binding Vine. Sibling jealousy runs in families. Sarita is jealous of her brother Dhruva and so is mother's darling and takes utmost care of her Renu treating Abhi in the same manner. Ambu, though not hostile, is mother to Urmi's irritation. He quite often makes sarcastic remarks about feminism such as "complex female" (24), "Bossy female" (25) and so on (132 - 133). Sibling jealousy is also between Vanna's children though belonging to the same sex. Indu's family of cousins shows no concern of one another and there is more malice than love.

There is always an elderly person exercising authority and is resented. Kamala and Akka are seen as "Mother Terrible". However, there is always an old man, who, with his wisdom of grey hairs, imparts the healing touch. Baba in The Dark Holds No Terrors asks Saru to face reality squarely and tell Manohar the facts straight instead of escaping from the
family. So does old uncle with his erudition of Huxley, Pushkin and Galsworthy in *Roots and Shadows*. In *The Binding Vine*, instead of an old man, there is Akka the mother-in-law (I addition to Baiajji) in the role of a mother who loves and cares.

Shashi Deshpande voices her protest over the practice of changing names of brides by their in-laws. This change or distortion seems to her heroines a cruelty and often results in identity crises.

"... this drastic change of identity ... how then do you know yourself and who you are? " (*DT* : 106).

"... their own names are forgotten ... to surrender your name so lightly .... " (*RS* : 117). "Nirmala, they call ... Can they make me Nirmala? I am Mira (*RS* : 101). "People names are very important, he used to say, You shouldn't take liberties with them " (*RS* : 119).

Rape victims abound in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *The Binding Vine*. Sarita considers herself to be a victim of "legalised" rape. There is another incident of rape by a father of his three daughters. That provokes Sarita to avenge this kind of injustice by committing adultery with Madhav. In *The Binding Vine* Mira is also a rape victim and so is Kalpana.

Deshpande raises a number of questions about childbirth, rape, dowry, Sati and so on, but she refuses to give ready made solutions or quack prescriptions, for she avers: "The invitation is to discover". All the three novels end abruptly with an open-endedness. The Post-modern stance is
maintained throughout with echoes, mirror images, spaces and circles " [DT : 158].

Shashi Deshpande's heroines Saru, in The Dark Holds No Terrors, the heroine, Saru is also able to escape from the trap that marriage is; after a lot of struggle and unhappiness she does succeed in having a room of her own. Isn't it ironical that a woman who looks after the whole family and household doesn't even have a room of her own. Her life is meaningless. Her existence is immaterial, unimportant. It is a known fact that a woman's life during childhood, youth and old age is spent in her parent's husband's and son's home respectively. At all the three stages of her life, she is dependent on man for her survival. She is made to live at the margin, never becomes the subject. All this leaves a scar on her psyche. Her contribution goes unrecognised. It is taken for granted. But now some women are realising that all norms of traditional feminine behaviour have been laid down by men for their own vested interests. Shashi Deshpande's heroines are courageous enough to revolt against the attempts of men to marginalise them.

Saru, is finally able to live a life that is really happy in the true sense no pretensions, no masks. Her childhood was not a happy one. She has only bitter memories of it. Her mother makes her feel guilty of her brother's death. Saru had seen her brother Dhruva, drowning in the water, but was unable to save him. Her mother all the time accused Saru of the death of Dhruva. The harsh words of her mother - "Why are you still alive?" "you killed your brother", "Why Didn't
you die?" Keep ringing in her ears even when she has grown up. She hates her mother and rebels against her by going to Bombay to study medicine. Here she falls in love with Manohar and marries him against the wishes of her mother. Saru hopes that her marriage would close the painful chapter of her childhood days. She didn't know that she had only moved from one prison to another - a worse one. It was hell this time. When she receives the news of her mother's death, she takes this opportunity to escape the violent world of her husband's house and returns to the family home ostensibly to take care of her father. It is here that she realises that merely shifting between her father's and husband's homes will not provide her the freedom that she desires. She ultimately realises that she has to walk out of these homes to lead her life as she likes.

When we first see Saru in her husband's house in Bombay, she is shown to be an unhappy woman who feels "there is this strange new fear of disintegration". A terrible consciousness of not existing, "No worse, of being just like a ventriloquist's dummy, that smiles, laughs and talks only because of the ventriloquist. The fear that without the ventriloquist, I will regress, go back to being a lifeless puppet, a smirk pasted on to its face". Her needs are simple. She just wants to live and, in order to do that, she has to get away from "This hell of savagery and submission" (28).

When Saru reaches her father's house, she reflects on the events of her life. Hers had been a love marriage. But her husband Manu turns vicious when his career as a poet does
not pick up and Saru is successful as a doctor. Earlier she was known as the bride of the poet Manu, but later she was becoming popular and famous as a lady doctor and Manu was referred to as her husband. Saru remembers painfully, "a+b they told us in maths is equal to b+a. But here a+b was definitely not equal to b+a. It became a monstrously unbalanced equation, lopsided, unequal, impossible." (41) The element of love had disappeared from their relationship. She realises that Manu is a sadist and this marks the beginning of their marital discord. When her father asks her if something was wrong with her husband, she reacts in a strange manner. "My husband?" asked, blankly as if she didn't know what the word meant. (198) Later she reveals to her father. "He attacked me like an animal at night, I was sleeping and I woke up and there was this man.... this man hurting me with his hands, his teeth his whole body." (200) Now love and romance were only illusions. They were no longer necessary in her life. She feels that the code word of the present age is sex. "Fulfilment and happiness came not through love alone but sex. And for me sex was a dirty word" (133).

In her home town, one day she sees a woman, a widow. She remembers that during her childhood she has seen the same woman in happier days. In those days she lovingly sent her husband off to office. But now the same woman is a widow. The sight of this widow makes her desperate. She feels that "I'm not that either.... I'm just nothing" (135).

The tragedy of Saru is that she does not know how to came out of the trap. In her husband's home she was like a
terrified and trapped animal. And even in her parents's home she gradually realises that there is more to life than just relying and depending on an unsuccessful marriage, parents, home, and other such social institutions. Finally, she decides to lead her life as an independent individual. She decides to cut off the traditional bonds of marriage and home and walks into the wide world.

Although she hates her mother, there is one thing that she finds she shares with her - "neither she nor I have that thing 'a room of our own" (136). She sees the hollowness, emptiness, nothingness in their lives, when she applies this phrase and relates it to their lives. This feeling of having a room of her own is accentuated when the brother of Madhava is lost and his parents are after him to find his brother. (Madhava is a young boy who stays with Saru's father). He gets frustrated and irritated by their constant messages and cries out: "I can't spoil life because of that boy. It's my life after all." (208). It is the magical effect of these four words that give a new meaning to Saru's life. These four words keep ringing in her mind, almost haunting her," And yet, they would not leave her alone. She went back to bed, the words going on and on in her mind" (208).

Towards the end of the novel, she receives a letter from her son, Abhi, informing her that Manu would be reaching her father's home. On learning this, she decides to go away. But she doesn't even have a home. She couldn't call her husband's home in Bombay, her home because it was not a home. And neither was her father's home a home to her. She
is standing at the cross roads, feeling. "How odd to live for so long and discover that you have no home at all" (215). Abhi’s letter leaves her in desperation. Once again she feels trapped. She feels the desperation and helplessness of a trapped animal, who was nowhere to go, and who will, finally, be the victim of his pursuer. She is tired of her life and tells her father that she just cannot go on like this. She has lived as a guilty sister, undutiful daughter, unloving wife, but only she knows that, if she was all of them, they were not all of her. She was all these and so much more. (220) At last she finds the connecting link. She decides to be puppet no more, standing “futilely on the stage for a brief while between areas of darkness” (220) She no longer wishes to cling to a tenuous shadow of a disintegrated marriage. She gains self confidence and becomes assertive. She is a different woman now. Earlier she had asked her father not to open the door for her husband. This was the attitude of a coward, who escapes from tough situations. But now with regained courage and confidence she tells her father: "And oh yes, Baba, if Manu comes, tell him to wait" (221). With these words, she goes to attend to a child who was suffering from fits. She is once again herself - a doctor a woman "and now there were no more thoughts in her, except those of the child she was going to help" (222).

In her novels, she explores and exposes the long smothered wail of the incarcerated psyche of her female protagonists imprisoned within the four walls of domesticity and sandwitched between tradition and modernity, between
illusion and reality and between the mask and the face. These women, however, disown a ritualistic and tradition-bound life in order to explore their true self. Concerned with quest for an authentic selfhood and an understanding of the existential problems of life, Deshpande's heroines are all agog to retain their individuality in the teeth of disintegrating and divisive forces that threaten their identity.

Shashi Deshpande has dealt graphically with the problems that confront a middle-class educated woman in the patriarchal Hindu Society. Her novels deal with the psychic turmoil of women within the limiting and restricting confines of domesticity. Her heroines are not, like the women of Anita Desai, neurotic and hysterical—a Maya or a Monisha ever ready to face the "ferocious assaults of existence ", as Desai (1979) herself told an interviewer. Deshpande does not make her women characters stronger than they actually are in their real life. She told her interviewer that her "Characters take their own ways " and that her "writing has to do with women as they are " Women as presented in her novels is a partial being, and is in need of someone to shelter her, be it her father, brother or husband. Indu, the protagonist in Roots And Shadows says: "This is my real sorrow that I can never be complete in myself "(34). Bogged down by existential insecurity and uncertainty, women in her novels are in quest of refuge, which in Roots And Shadows is portrayed through the image of the house.

Roots and Shadows explores the inner self of Indu, who symbolises the 'New Woman' who is educated and who lives
in lose association with society brushing aside all its narrow conventions. She has the freedom to talk about anything she likes and is also free of think of her own caged self besides politics, corruption and what not. Married to Jayant, Indu freely moves with Naren and uses such words as "Kiss", "Rape", "Deflowered", "Orgasm" (78) and so on her conversation with him. Indu says:

"We're gay and whimsical about our own people, our own country. We are rational, unprejudiced, broadminded. We discuss intelligently, even solemnly, the problems of unemployment, poverty, corruption, family planning. We scorn the corrupt. We despite the ignorant, we hate the wicked... And our hearts bleed, Naren, for Vietnam, for the blacks, for the Harijans..... But frankly, we care a damn. Not one goddam about anything but our own precious selves, our own precious walled-in lives" (RS: 25).

Through the character of Indu, Deshpande has portrayed the inner struggle of an artist to express herself, to discover her real self through her inner and instinctive potential for creative writing. Indu wants to bid adieu to her monotonous service but her husband, Jayant, does not approve of this idea. He is a barrier to her feminine urge for self-expression since he believes that a person like can do nothing against the whole system by wielding her pen:

"What can one person do against the whole system. No point making a spectacle of yourself with futile gestures. We need the money, don't we? Don't forget, we have a long way to go" (RS: 17).
The temperaments of the husband and the wife are diametrically opposite to each other. One is sympathetic to the ills of the society, the 'system', whereas the other is nonchalant. One is writer in quest of an artistic selfhood while the other is a philistine in pursuit of materialistic happiness. Despite these temperamental differences, Indu is quite submissive. She did not ask him, "To go where?" Instead she silently went back to her work, though hating herself for it. Her self-alienation increases as she becomes aware of the conflicting demands made on her by her desire to conform to a cultural ideal of feminine passivity and her ambition to be a creative writer. Thus Indu perceives herself as a shadow of the female self, a negative and an object. Miller observes that "when one is an object, not a subject, all of one's own physical and sexual impulses and interests are presumed not to exist independently". Indu is hedged in, incarcerated, unable to "go on" through the ordeal of life, "feeling trapped" to and seeing herself "endlessly chained" (18) in the long dusty road that lay ahead of her. When she receives Akka's summons she heaves a sigh of relief:

"It had been a welcome reprieve. A chance to get away. To avoid thinking about what was happening to me ... to Jayant and me ... and our life together" (RS:18).

A woman's role is not only confined to the centripetal needs of the family in which she lives but also to its centrifugal needs. It is here that a woman has to be more than a submissive housewife. She has to become a 'society lady', as Shobha De would put it. Indu does not pride in her suffering. She cannot
bear with the suffering she has to face in the family and therefore being, without a sense of the wholeness of personality. But with Jayant she feels a sense of completion and wholeness:

"I had felt incomplete, not as a woman, but as a person. And in Jayant I had thought I had found the other part of my whole self" (RS: 51).

Indu recognises her displacement and marginalisation as a woman, and a process of ego-dissolution begins. She finds herself merging into others, experiencing a loss of boundaries. The authoritative and dominating male has not only suppressed the female voice but also brought silence, dullness and repulsion to the houses women live in. 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.

A married women like Indu is left with practically no choice save what her husband wills and desires. She cannot unburden herself, and her feminine instinct in curbed and suppressed. Despite all these, she is reluctant to admit failure and drags on with her marital life, which only imprisons her true self. She confesses 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).

Indu's is the paradoxical situation in which Indian women are enmeshed. Indu leads an ambivalent life. She
cherishes within her heart deep and profound love but when the occasion comes to express it she retraces. This is because she is nourished and reared by a tradition - ridden society. Indu ultimately realises that she has been chasing shadows, leaving her roots far behind in the family and in Jayant. Naren with whom she develops an adulterous relationship, is nothing more than a mere shadow to her. He has no permanent place in her memory. Hence she decides to go back to Jayant. It is she, she feels who is to blame for the martial discord in their lives. She has created a hell out of a heaven. She, being a narcissist, " had locked herself in a cage and thrown away the keys " (RS :85). Thus Indu's uncompromising and paradoxical feminine self - expression , finally finds its roots in the home and with her husband . Shadows disappear from her vision and she sees the clear light of day with the realization and discovery of her authentic female self.

In recent Indian English fiction, the accent is on the freedom of women. This new trend in fiction, no doubt, reflects a desirable change in the contemporary society Literature is indeed, a reflection of society. The same pattern of discontent and retaliation, the desire and demand for freedom is evident in Githa Hariharan's The Thousand Faces of Night and Indira Mahindra's The End Play . The situations, characters and stories are different but the demand for freedom is the unmistakable theme. It is relevant to mention here the experiments conducted by Satish Kumar Karla and Rasmi Raina of the Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow, in order to study the reflections of an average Indian woman.
Although women have entered the erstwhile male domains, yet they feel trapped in uncomfortable situations. In order to find a solution to their plight, the two authors conducted a study and published the results in the Indian Journal of Training and Development. In one item the respondent was asked to imagine herself/himself as any other living being other than humans and also mention the reason for the particular choice. The result shows that 71.4% women wanted to become birds because of "Freedom". "I want to be free from the shackles of prescriptive roles, systems, structures and relationships which the society has to offer," writes Rashmi Raina and S.K. Karla while describing the reflections of an average educated Indian Women.8

In some of their highly acclaimed works, the second generation Indian English women novelists have favourably responded to the changed psychological realities of Indian life after Independence. In doing so they seem to have Indian women. Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Shashi Deshpande and Nergis Dalal who constitute this group are emotionally and intellectually well equipped to give an authentic treatment to this situation.

The charge of narrowness and lack of vision is often brought against the women novelists as a whole. The second generation Indian women novelists, however, stand as a unique exception to this rather sweeping generalization. The personal background and intellectual training of these novelists seem to have endowed the speciality which their
fictional product bears. Their wide acquaintance with the vagaries and nuances of life, both in the East and the West, and their achievement of often high educational and intellectual standards have given a sharp edge to their observation. Their natural feminine sensibility and introspection have imparted to their observation a humane touch and a psychological depth.

According to an admission Anita Desai’s purpose in writing is to discover for herself and then aesthetically convey the truth which for her is synonymous with art. Therefore, her endeavour is to discover the significance of reality by “plunging below the surface and plumbing the depths, then illuminating those depths till they become a more lucid, brilliant and explicable reflection of the visible world”.9 Kamala Markandaya believes that “the process of creative writing reveals depth in the mind which are of universal application”.10 Nergis Dalal incorporates "the essential loneliness of every human being and a sense of compassion"11 into her writings. She is well known for a profitably employing the revolutionary findings of modern psychology for creative purposes.

Though stated in different words by different authors, an interesting preoccupation of these writers appears to be the delving into the labyrinthine depths of the Indian psyche and showing its relation to society. The psychic and moral dilemmas of the new Indian woman has been explored by women writers. And nowhere is this concern more obvious than in the novels that figure neurotic characters. The characters are shown as grappling on the one hand with the
changed realities of Indian life and the trauma they entail and on the other hand with the psychic conflicts of personal origin. These conflicts and traumas become too pronounced at a particular point of time in their life and their ability to hold their feelings under repression gives way. Anita Desai 's *Cry*, *The Peacock* and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Bharati Mukerjee's *Wife*, Kamla Markandaya's *A Silence of Desire*, Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's *Get Ready For Battle*, Nayantara Sahgal's *The Day in Shadow* and Nergis Dalal 's *The Inner Door* thus portray sensitive individuals in their moments of intense struggle and in their efforts to seek neurotic solutions to their problems. In the course of the ordeal called 'living', the protagonists of these novels find themselves at odds with society and undergo various degrees of psychological transformation. Both as a physical reality outside and a psychic agent within society which we take to mean the essence of one's relationships with others, plays a crucial role in bringing about this change for the worse forcing these sensitive people to seek neurotic solutions to their problems.

In their endeavour to come to terms with the reality of their situation and depending on the degree of their affectability and the pressure of the external circumstances these characters neurotically react in three different ways. The hyper-sensitive and deeply affectable Maya of *Cry*, *The Peacock* and Dimple of *Wife* get their psyches corroded by unhealthy introspection. In the process, they move too far away from the ordinary course of life, and at the end, nose-
dive into the dark abysmal depths of psychosis. Sarla Devi of *Get ready For Battle*, Simrit of *The Day in Shadow* and Rahul of *The Inner Door* follow almost an opposite neurotic course. On being compelled to silently suffer the strain of life they do not bite upon their heart but defy the social injunctions but only to become compulsive idealists. Their idealism is not born of their volition or of a genuine change of heart but of an attitude of revenge and necessitated by an inner compulsion to escape. Neurosis, however has a sobering effect on the other group of characters. Sita of *Where Shall We Go this Summer?*, Sarojini of *A Silence Of Desire* and Jaya of *That Long Silence* make important discoveries about themselves during their neurotic suffering and in the last analysis they find a measure of fulfillment in their relation to the world.

The Women novelists in English have very ably treated the neurotic phenomenon in the Indian context by creating extremely interesting personages. Through this endeavour they have been able to lay bare the oppressive and anti human value system of the society. Through the sensitive portrayal of the psychic conflicts and the psychological contours of helpless people the novelists seem to underline the importance of subverting the established values and replacing them with those values which are more amenable to human nature and which promote happiness. For this purpose the steely frame of the social machine, which forges and fosters these values, itself needs an overhaul. The women novelists bring home this point by subtly indicating that the society is often indifferent
and vindictive towards sensitive and suffering people while actually it should be rushing to their help.

Our argument here is not to prove that the women novelists concern has been exclusively with the inner life of their characters. They have dealt with cultural, political and social issues in a good number of their novels, but the focus has always been on the human condition and it has been artistically rendered with a deep sense of compassion for the characters. In the novels mentioned earlier, this concern has reached its pinnacle, leading to the creation of the psychologically most interesting personages - neurotic characters. In this endeavour they have superbly succeeded because among other things they are women Indian women, in view of their limited freedom and insular mode of life, have shown for ages a marked tendency towards growing introspective which is a prelude for neurotic reaction. This sort of feminine sensibility has a close relation to neurosis at least in the Indian context. Neurosis almost always results from a compulsion to repress one's feelings and desires because they are not in consonance with the accepted norms of society. Women suffer more than men because they are denied opportunities for open expression of their true feelings in the tradition-bound Indian society. Similar views have been expressed by Alfred Al. Moller, “Neurosis is caused by bottled up feelings because when people repress their feelings, they repress their memories and traumatic experiences”\(^\text{12}\).

In spite of their privileged position the women novelists have gone through conflicts which are not at great variance
with those of other Indian women. Conflicts of a qualitatively different nature have always characterised the life of every freedom-conscious woman in India, including the novelists. These novelists have therefore naturally created characters who are capable of close and sensitive experience of life as they themselves are.

The characters of the novels mentioned previously, face problems of predominantly personal nature and they seek to resolve them at the personal level. The solution of Sarojini, Sarla Devi and Rahul is in keeping with the religious practices of India which, to certain extent, obscures their neurotic personalities. This religious element has been placed in proper perspective by the women novelists who are helped by an admirable understanding of the vagaries and travails of the human psyche.

Psychoanalytic thinkers from Freud onwards have not only viewed religion cynically but dubbed it as an instrument of oppression. Freud thinks religion to be "patently infantile, so foreign to reality." As one with a friendly attitude to humanity he finds it painful that the great majority of people will continue to believe the falsehoods propagated in the name of religion. He therefore interprets it as a collective childhood neurosis of mankind. Erich Fromm puts it the other way round: "We can interpret neurosis as a private form of religion, more specifically, as a regression to primitive forms of religion conflicting with officially recognized patterns of religious thought." The women novelists have shown an
almost uncanny awareness of the untenable claims of religion and exposed them by creating neurotic characters who seek religious solution. In the process neurosis and religion become indistinguishable; thus proving the contention of psychoanalysis without ever intending to do so.

Further the novelists, higher education has given them a deep insight into the human psyche and a clear critical perspective to re-examine tradition. They shed their inhibitions in a marvellous fashion and showed surprising frankness, boldness and honesty in the fictional treatment of the workings of the human psyche. Even the men novelists have not been so frank. They have instinctively avoided such matters as sex, while the women have elaborately but artistically treated them. Shashi Deshpande along with Nayantara Sahgal, Shobha De and Namita Gokhale, takes us not only into the bedroom of their characters and their behavioural patterns but also focus on the factors that account for unconventional actions presented in the course of their novels.

A comprehensive psychoanalytic approach to theses novelists has been thus long overdue. The few studies that have already incorporated the formulations of depth psychology have concerned themselves only with the overtly neurotic characters such as Maya and Sita. The other important neurotic characters have gone totally unnoticed or have been studied from totally irrelevant angles. One reason for this situation appears to be that the neurotic reaction of some of these characters coincides with the prevailing cultural
practices of India. The neurotic picture behind the baffling actions of Sarojini, Sarla Devi and Rahul comes to light only when it is studied in the light of the depth psychology.

Psychoanalytic approach thus helps us with a better appreciation of the human situation of the characters of the women novelists and sharpens our understanding of and enhances our sympathy for them. At a time when the opinion that one has reached the limits of critical possibility in the field of Indian writing in English is gradually settling, the endeavour to study the neurotic characters using psychoanalytic insights promises to reveal the new depths in the fiction of Indian English women writers.
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