Chapter III: **THE GOLDEN MID**

3.1 Come Up and Be Dead
3.2 Roots and shadows
3.1 Come Up and Be Dead
In the feminist world, suppression of woman gets the meaningful term. Because of not the theoretical concern, but the practical concern. As a result, woman is facing, struggling and sometimes fighting against the bitter situation. She encounters the naked reality at the grass root level due to the culture and tradition. That uses the power of exploitation to exploit her.

The theme of the novel *Come Up And Be Dead* is suppression of woman in the male dominated society and also women's struggle to erect her identity in the society, where male are chauvinist and traditional in outlook. At the outlook the novel appears to be a kind detective one and like *If I Die Today*, it is the full of suspense, mystery and horrifying incident of death. The story of the novel is set in a girl's school somewhere in India in the post independence era.

The novelist has deliberately taken up girl's school because her purpose is to focus up on the problems; females have to face in the society. The story of the novel is narrated by Devayani. It is her experience and keen observations which are recorded minutely in the novel. The girls are made victims everywhere in the society. The death of Mridula is a case of girl's victimization. Her death has created ripples in the schools premises and has shocked the parents of other girls. The actual reason of her death is not described by the novelist. She died under mysterious circumstance as her voice was silent and other girls, also the senior members of the school are hesitant and afraid to talk over the death of Mridula.

Even the close friends of Mridula are restrained from speaking out their minds. Sonali the friend of Mridula is crying in wilderness. She is a representative of female living in the male dominated society, who has to internalize the standard set by men and her own self has been suppressed.
She perhaps knows a lot of about the friend's death and perhaps her statement could have provided a proper clue to nab the culprit's hand. But she is met to keep quiet,

Sonali said, as if answering a question, its Mridula's handwriting all right, Miss. And now, they're all talking about Mridula. They're all saying Mrudula was..." The word was too enormous for her, two strange, she couldn't say it. She left it there between them and went on. "And that she committed suicide. They don't believe me when I tell them they're wrong. I tried, Miss, honest I tried... (Come Up and Be Dead, 1983: 22, 23).

According to Deshpande women's voice carries no significance in the society. The school which is meant for girls betrays the look of a female who learn only to keep quiet and suffer. The sheer physical presence of the school; at least at first sight, is massive, imposing and forbidding. A narrow gate leads up to a high wall. Shred of glass spike to top of the wall; lending to it a touch of menace. The starkness of this is in no way diminished or redeemed by "the soft, grey patina of old age (02). The building had acquired nor by its flowering laburnums, the gulmohars, the large grounds and the rain trees. Such beauty as the exterior of the school may have is overshadowed by an uncertainty, vagueness and even a pervasive melancholy. The school is a place where perhaps victimization of women is institutionalised in the same way as the exploitation of women is institutionalised in the family. In Kamala Markandaya, A Silence of Desire, Dandekar has taken it for granted that his wife is the best servant for him. He does not treat his wife as a human being, even in her own right. For him there is no difference between tulsiplant kitchen and his wife. Sounds in the kitchen symbolize the presence of his wife in the house. The school, in Come Up And Be Dead is the place where women's are made to suffer, bear
the agony silently and any attempt to voice out their protect is silenced ruthlessly. Even Kshama Rao the headmistress, of the school considers it proper to keep quiet in the matter relating to the death of Mridula. That is why she does not bring on her face her reaction when the students write on the Black in bold capital letters.

WHO DID IT TO MRIDULA?
PRATAP
WHY DID MRIDULA DIE?
PRATAP.
WHO BROUGHT PRATAP HERE?
The HEAD MISTRESS.
GET THEM OUT. THROW THEM OUT (1983: 79).

The emotion of KshamaRao is very beautifully depicted by the novelist, “Sit down in your places, all of you” (79). She said finally, curtly, determined to show nothing of what she was feeling. While the girls settled down noisily, pushing back their seats with more, she said, “Jennifer, go and wipe the board” (79). KshamaRao is representative female protagonist of Deshpande who is helpless, weak, docile and submissive. As befitting the genre, a mere chance encounter in a train has brought one Miss KshamaRao, the protagonist, to this location and soon she will take charge as the “Head Mistress of this large, old, exclusive girl’s school” (04). Once in harness, Kshama has a full-down crisis on her untried and still tentative hands. In order to reassure the reader, perhaps, it is said about her,

There was no doubt at all that the woman who stood on the dais was fully in command, both of the situation and herself... Looking at the steady eyes which watched (her)... One would
have thought... here's a woman who knows what she wants. And gets it (1983: 6, 7).

But it is no ordinary crisis she faces: One of the school girls, Mridula, is found dead. Speculation is rife. Was it suicide? Was there foul play? It is common knowledge that the girl was pregnant at the time! Accusing fingers are pointed even at Kshama's own brooding and slightly mysterious brother, Pratap. However Pratap's involvement in the death of the girl is difficult to be determined. Fingers are raised against Pratap and even Devayani thinks that it is proper to keep Pratap in the college premises,

I mean. And how dare the HM keep him here in this school with so many girls? It isn't safe. Dear old Pai has been talking about making a representation on behalf of the parents and all that rot (67).

The prescient of Pratap in the school premises where which is meant only for girl is not safe and secure. Pratap is a male and males always disturbed the peace and tranquility of women's life. This is what Shashi Deshpande probably thinks. Pratap is suppose to be having secrete relation with Mridula and perhaps Pratap in pregnant her which caused the crisis. Devayani suspect some whole play she asks, "Pratap, was there something between you and the girl who died?" (69). Devayani further questioned him that what he has got to say regarding the purples remarks. Mridula's mother had come to male inquiry and she was talking about some anonymous letters. Pratap replies,

Just a few days before she died. I thought it was a joke when she said Pratap, will you marry me?" Too old For you, I said. Doesn't
Matter,' she said. 'I don't know if I'm any good to any girl,' I told her (1983: 72).

This statement makes it clear that Pratap has established some relation with the girl. Man is always instrumental in creating crisis in women's life. And so Pratap has created. But Deshpande denies to playing the role of the feminist. She is not against men. She has made it absolutely clear that she has nothing to do with feminism in her neuroscience, In her interview to Ashvini Sarpeshkar Tondon, for example, 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 relationship. I certainly do not think my novels are a man vs. woman issue of all (Femina, May 1993).

She is not at all a propagandist writer being woman herself. She sympathises with women, and in an interview with Carvalho she told,

If others see, something feminist in my writings, "I must say that it is not consciously done. It is because the world for women is like that and I am mirroring the world (The Sunday Observer, 11 Feb, 1990).

What is most clear about Deshpande is that, she may be feminist or not but in all the novels she has created the women who have a strength of their own and in spite of challenges and hostilities remain uncrushed for example: The headmistress KshamaRao in the novel is very strong and tacketful character. Deshpande has created authentic female characters. Flesh and blood character with recognizable credentials. She has successfully delineated their problems and plights yearnings and aspirations, failures and foibles in the Indian context. In this novel the readers finds
suspense and thinks the murder of the girl has raised so many doubts and speculations Deshpande has introduced some what predictable elements like notes scribbled messages and letters which indirectly refer to victims of the incidents and which might help in unearthing the villains. KshamaRao receives phone calls,

The Head Mistress ? a voice asked. "Yes, yes," she spoke irritably. She hated people repeating themselves, or forcing her to do so. "For how long ?" the voice asked. "I beg your pardon ?" "How long are you going to stay the Head Mistress ? your days are numbered. You'll see how right I am. Very soon. Today (1983: 76).

The mother of Mrudula comes to the headmistress with anonymous letters for seeking explanations about her daughter's death moreover on the blackboard of the classroom there are scribbled messages against the Headmistress. The Headmistress like other representative female characters of Deshpande is quite courageous and bold her coming to the school makes the beginning and set the pace. She is young efficient phlegmatic, she has got unruffled manner, "nothing untidely in her life. Even her emotions washed, froned, neatly folded and put away" (23). Her professional integrity has been widely acclaimed but the people around her are scarcely aware of the agitation and complexes within her. KshamaRao's personal qualities reflect the influence of her father who was larger than life and she has the younger brother who has refused to live her alone and is now residing at the girl's school.

In the dramatis Personae of Deshpande's Come Up and Be Dead by the side of Kshama there is only one other full-fledged character, namely, her cousin Devayani. The rest, such as her brother Pratap, her colleagues
like Mrs. Jyoti Raman her students like Sonali, her mentor Mr. Matthews, the police officer and the doctor, are at best secondary; their presence and their movements gravitate around Kshama and the school and around the sordid goings on. Even Devayani serves as a foil to her cousin supplying a kind of domestic identity to her. Similarly, the ones responsible for the deadly Mayhem on the school campus and off ultimately serve the purpose of underscoring Kshama’s focal importance in the meandering plot structure of *Come Up and Be Dead*.

The incident of murder of Mridula in the school campus brought a lot of problems to KshamaRao. She has to face people’s remarks and as a Head of the institutions. She has to provide an answer to people’s questions. KshamaRao acts very tactfully but the strength of sufferings can be felt the way. She acts. The girls of the school as well as the parents continued to talk about Pratap’s involvement in the murder. KshamaRao considers herself quite helpless to satisfy the people regarding Pratap’s role in the matter. Pratap is her brother and as a sister it is her duty to protect and support her brother. In fact Kshamarao has to face a kind of conflict between her role as a head of institution, and the role of a sister. There is conflict between her duty and affection. Had there been a man in place of KshamaRao he would have acted differently and boldly. But the Head Mistress has to undergo a lot of trials and tribulations for being a female. But she is bold and courageous as a typical female protagonist of Deshpande. The males in the novels of Deshpande are skeptic about the integrity and character of the females. In *That Long Silence* Mohan doubts the character of Jaya. In this novel also there is portrayal of relationship between Bunny and Abbas. Abbas is a modern type of boy. Bunny seems to be closer to him. Bunny and her friend Sona come together. They want to talk to Abbas regarding the
Gruesome's murder in the school campus. But Abbas does not believe in Bunny's credentials and the following exert may very well exemplifies this,

But Sona pounced on her with an abrupt, "Bunny, I want to talk to you." "What about?" Abbas who had moved to open the door for Bunny. "Went back to his place. "Bunny, you came early to school today, didn't you?" "Did I?" Don't you dare to deny it. I saw you I'd gone to our terrace to get the wet towels down when I saw your car come in. I thought ... that looks like Bunny's car, Why is she here so early? And then I saw you getting out of the car. So don't you dare to deny it, the girl repeated. "But I'm not. I'd just forgotten about it. Yes, I did come early today." 'What for?' Bunny shrugged. "So boring, really but I hadn't done my maps. And you know how Miss Mistry is. So I thought I'll come early and copy it from someone else" And you went to class. Was it open? For the first time Bunny hesitated. She looked at Sona in a guarded manner before replying, 'No' then after a small pause. It was locked, so I just wandered away somewhere. You're lying, Bunny. You're a liar. You lied to me about Mridula. And now this." 'About Mridula?' There was genuine astonishment on her face. What lie did I tell you about her?" About Mridula and Pratap being friends, Mridula never said any such thing. She'd have told me too if she'd thought so. And Devi says that Pratap told her there was never anything between them. 'Him and Mridu, I mean. Why did you tell me such lies? (1983: 86-87).

Bunny says strongly that Pratap is the only person who is solely responsible for the death of Mridula. "Pratap is a nut" and Mridula is dead" (88). Sona, her friend warns Bunny not to go into such things and invite trouble "And that is why I want to warn you. Forget about this. Leave it alone" (89). Deshpande has in fact tried to depict frankly the vile side of characters in this novel like Mr. Abbas and Mr. Varma. They are typical male characters who do anything to exploit girls. Mr. Varma, a member of the school board of Governors is a deceptive character, he betrays a very saintly look from out but from within he is a rotten man he rolls in wealth
and lives a luxurious life. He is a friend of Kshama he supports her in any of her confrontations with the school and the parents of the town. But in fact he is responsible for luring young and unsuspecting girls into selling their bodies. Even Kshama doubts his character that is why she is uncertain about joining the meeting of PTA which was called by Mr. Varma. Her cousin Devayani is unable to decide this issue,

She couldn’t make up her mind. Should she go? Or, should she stay away? If she stayed away, they’d think she was scared. If she did go, would she not inhibit the discussion? Or worse, hear herself being criticized openly, she knew she couldn’t put up with that. She couldn’t bear the thought that her actions were open to criticism. Why could they not understand what she was doing and why? Why could not people see things except in relation to their own petty selves? She felt that only she had this understanding, this grasp of the school as a thing belonging not just to here and now, but as being part of a whole that she alone could see. It was something she had learnt from Appa, perhaps, this ability to see a thing not in itself, but in relation to other things, other times, both the past and the future (1983: 93-94).

Professional rivalries are there in the school, but what is a matter of deep concern is that women are victimized by men in power. Devayani in the novel is trapped by a wicked doctor. She may have to be eliminated because she knows too much about Varma. Ms. Varma succumbs to debauchery because she has suffered at the hand of woman she has became a woman exploiters because of a revengeful urge in him towards woman Mr. Varma, “carried a canker of hatered for young woman within him” (264), he turned out to be so because his own wife deserted him. Soon after marriage the cause doctors is equally similar he always wanted to impress his wife with money because his in – laws dislike the marriage and hence they served all contact with him after marriage. So in both the cases that of the
doctor and varma some revengeful motive against women is working probably Deshpande desires to bring to light the falls sense of superiety of man against woman. A man can not tolerate any suffering if it is caused to him by a woman. Whereas woman helplessly undergoes all exploiters done to her by man. In the novel are the evil – doers and they would not hesitated to exercise their influences to make the woman characters their subordinates.

Deshpande is very a mature artist. She does not relate directly her experiences about man in the society, where the woman is subordinate. But she narrates her bitter experiences in very surprising and interesting manner. In this novel In Come Up And Be Dead for example, the death of Mridula is announced on page six of the novel which is where the novel actually begins, very soon death of another teacher Mr. Raman is publicised which stuns the readers. The novelist also does not shrink even an inch in recounting how the men - folk treat women as their prey. There is a racket of call girls in the school and the deaths are related to it. The school management requires the girls and makes them to bow before men. The great doctor Girish was involved in the call- girl- racket.

It is not safe for women to live in the society where men are hypocrites and great exploiters. This is what women mistake for man. In fact men and women are divided by 'desire discrepancy' over sex. For men it is an act complete in itself. Men desire it for the intrinsic pleasure it is capable of yielding. For women it is more of an act of intimacy and emotional gratification. For a man like Mr. Varma in Come Up And Be Dead outraging the humility of women and loss of virginity matters a lot. It was
perhaps the loss of virginity of Mridula and the resultant humiliations in the aftermath which made her to commit suicide.

For many women novelist and for Deshpande as well sex happens to be one of the very few interpersonal experiences. Sex is a matter to be enjoyed in its raw aspect. In cultural set-ups like India where sexual morality is indistinguishable from morality in general the women grow highly inhibited on the sexual front. The Indian women tend to associate it with the aggression of their men, a weapon they wield to subdue them. Often by intentionally withholding sexual favors from the men they hope to score a point, or at least voice their dissent. Whereas men like Girish, the doctor in *Come Up And Be Dead* do everything right from taking their female counterparts to restaurants to offering gifts in order to win their favor. Devayani in the novel is invited along with her cousin Pratap to a grand restaurant for a candle light dinner. At the restaurant Devayani looked like a "fascinated kid" (1983: 129). She has fascinated because she says: "First time I've been in a place like this" (129). At home Devayani was never allowed to go out because "It was not considered very respectable" (129). Women in traditional Indian society are not allowed freedom which man enjoys. Deshpande detests such restriction imposed upon female. Even Shoba De in her *Socialite Evening* has condemned bitterly such kind of harsh and discriminatory treatment given to woman. De denounces the double standard that males practices in the society. In Kamala Markandaya, *A Silence of Desire* Rukmini is also subjected to discrimination by her husband Dandekar. It is accepted from women that they should blindly follow and swallow the substandard treatment that women were given by their men. In *Come Up And Be Dead* Pratap remembers that Appa never
took out the family however he allowed his children to enjoy certain freedom which their mother was denied.

You remember that place we used to go to when we came to you in the holidays?” Pratap said suddenly now. “That restaurant with a family room? I loved it. At home, Appa never took us out anywhere. Your father let us have whatever we wanted. But your mother never came with us (1983: 129).

Davayani being the spokesperson of the novelist brings out the personal feelings, her license dislikes in her statements. Davayani hates to look beautiful for the sake of a man. While dining and gossiping with Girish she says to herself,

Now looking at this man’s face when he spoke of his wife, I wondered... Would I have had this from some person if I had been beautiful? Then I despised myself for falling into this trap of wanting to be beautiful for the sake of a man (131).

Davayani hates the feeling of passiveness of Girish, which he shows towards his wife. Girish was married to a girl of a very tender age the girl suffered loneliness and isolation because Girish remained externally busy with his affairs. But she has to cope with it like a “happy girl” (132). This remark reverberates the earlier remark “Go home like a good girl” (Long Silence, 1988: 115). That Deshpande uses to qualify the nature and helplessness was of Jaya in That Long Silence. Regarding his wife Girish says,

Poor girl,” he said, “She’s two young for marriage really. Sometimes she just can’t cope with things. It’s too much for her, me, my work, my patients, my friends, my family. Then she
Major Thematic Concerns in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande

... goes away to her own family and becomes just a happy girl again (1983: 132).

Devayani strongly hated man's control over women in the society and what she hated absolutely is that men considered their right to control woman as natural. In Sexual Politics Kate Millet distinguishes between 'sex' and 'gender' sex is biological whereas gender is social and cultural but in the society gender is considered as natural. Devayani in Come Up And Be Dead hates the institution of marriage. She is unmarried and willing not to marry "and now... It's too late. I can't just marry for the sake of being married. It has to mean so much more" (133). But she is unlike the women protagonists of Shobha De. The women protagonists in the novels of De denounce and ridicule the institution of marriage and more than that they do not hesitate to enjoy all kinds of pleasure without marriage. In her Starry Nights Asha Rani and in her Socialite Evening Anjali enjoy sex and interact with man of all ages.

In Come Up and Be Dead Devayani however does not come so close to Girish. She maintains what may be called respectable distance. Deshpande's females are not rebels. They prefer to compromise than declare revolt and so is Kshama, what is interesting about the two protagonist kshama and Devyani is that they are unmarried and do not wish to marry. Kshama dislikes her brother Pratap and may be she dislikes all males. Deshpande has very tactfully and skillfully blended the voice of female with the element of suspense and surprise. In the middle of the novel the readers are taken aback with the news of death of Pratap. It is informed that Pratap died of a fall from the ladder. But Devayani does not agree with this. For her Pratap's death is a planned murder,
I stared at the place for a long time as if it could tell me something. And when I went in I knew it as if, I had seen it all.... Pratap's death had been no accident. He had not died because of a fall from a ladder. Someone had killed him (1983: 144-145).

Pratap's murder is perhaps planned by the novelist because he is an evil-doer and must be penallised for that—this is a kind of poetic justice given to Pratap. Deshpande is of firm conviction that sin must be followed by suffering in order the get redemption so what may be considered is that there is a sort of biblical theme in this novel. Pratap has committed the 'sin' (the death of Mridula) though it is not made clear, it is evidenced. There are lot of circumstantial evidences to that and therefore Pratap dies but the reason of his death is neither known nor clear. It may be said here that there is a feeling of pity in the minds of a readers for the innocent sufferers but Pratap is no innocent sufferers and hence his demice is neither lamented by KshamaRao nor by the readers. KshamaRao's mental disposition over the death of Pratap is very beautifully described by Devayani.

It seemed to me that I had never known how important Kshama was, or, her position, really, until I saw the cars that came to her after Pratap's death. They kept coming the whole day and I wondered how she could sit there and receive their sympathies for the death of a brother she had never loved. To do her justice, however, there was no hypocrisy in her. She sat there, dry-eyed, like a person enduring a thing stoically, responding by a few words, nothing more (145).

However Pratap's death creates a lot of surprise and suspense in the mind of the readers. The letter Pratap has left behind reflects that he had
been suffering from a kind of unique indecisiveness and uncertainty. Devayani reads the letter and feels pity for him.

There were some words and sentences too, which seemed both disjoined and meaningless. "I came home and there she was despising me all over again." Who was that ? Kshama ? After, that the date. "23rd February, "They'll never believe me." Some more doodles then, and after that ..... My father is dead, my father is alive, Dead, Alive Dead. Alive (1983: 146-147).

The death of Pratap appears a little bit cruel to the reader. We are reminded of the death of Macbeth in Shakespeare's play – Macbeth. When a grieved, Macduff brings the painful message, "Our royal master's murdered! Lady Macbeth responds as though surprised, "What, in our house?" To which Banquo's apt rejoinder is, "Too cruel anywhere" (Macbeth, II, iii, 1989: 93).

Deshpande has brought out the helplessness of a girl through which she has to suffer in male-dominated society. In this novel Sona is asked by mother to leave the school. Sona does not want to go. She is shocked that her mother did not consult her before taking a decision of her withdrawal from the school. Sona thinks that her mother does not consider her as an individual who could be consulted and who could be asked –

At least, it you'd asked me.... discussed things with me. But no, you just go ahead and make your plans as if I don't matter, as if I'm not there at all. I don't care, I'm not coming with you. You can go anywhere you like I'm staying here (1983: 159).

Sona thinks that she would better live independently with financial help from the school or that from her father – "Or I'll write to my father. I'll tell him. He'll help me" (160). But she does not know that her father is a
male and according to the novelist males are not to be depended upon. “Men... they're made that way. There's nothing we can do about it. We have got to put up with their demands. And you'll get used to it one day. We all do” (1983: 162). Deshpande hates institution of marriage because marriage brings in its aftermath ennui, boredom and frustration. Husbands use wives and discard them like useless things. This is what Deshpande has brought out in most of her novels.

Traditionally, in the Hindu marriage the position of husband and wife is clearly defined. The husband is expected to be the authoritarian figure whose will should always dominate the life of the wife. The wife should regard him as her master and should serve faithfully. Thus the traditional concept of superior husband and subordinate wife had been the guideline of Hindu marriage (Urvashi Sinha & Gur Pyari Jandial, 2004: 130).

In the novel *Come Up And Be Dead* the readers are again shocked with the news of one more death of Sona's mother, Mrs. Raman “Your mother's dead. She's dead there, on the table—her face...” (1983: 172). The reason of the death of Mrs. Raman is as usual shrouded in mystery.

And yet this woman, Mrs. Raman, had been murdered. There was no doubt it at all. And he had not been able to find any reason why anyone should have killed her. But, what this young woman tells me ... it's only her theory, after all. No, even theory is too big a word. It's all her guess work (183).

Towards the end of the novel, Kshama and the police officer reflect on the past events. He says, referring to his timely rescue of Devayani,
She and the doctor left together quite openly.... It was ridiculously easy after that.... The heroics are still to come. The man Varma is hoping to get away. But, If I have anything to do with it, he won't.... all his money and influence notwithstanding." "Varma", she said sadly now, thinking of the man and his championship of her. How could he, or the doctor, have got into something so sordid? I suppose one could find explanations like.... the doctor was obsessed with making money. To impress his wife, maybe, or his family who cuts him off because he married her or, that Varma carried a canker of hatred for young women within him because his own wife deserted him soon after marriage. Oh, didn't you know that? He wasn't a sorrowful widower as was generally believed, you know. Well, as I was saying, one could find all kinds of explanations for their behaviour. But, as for me, I believe in the theory of evil (1983: 264).

These words (as well as the ones quoted at the beginning of this essay) bear a remarkable similarity to what George Meredith has stated "I see no sin: The wrong is mixed in tragic life. God wot, no Villain need be! Passion spins the plot" (Modern love, 1972: 722). Here is a fitting spot to love's grave. If the death of love had deeply planned I never could have made it half so sure. One need not look for sins and sinners outside of oneself. Goodness and villainy are latent in all of us; Amidst so much that is good, one single weakness, one wrong step or that tragic flaw (in the Shakespearean sense) is enough to undo and bring about the malignancy of evil. Evil lurks in our lives, now waiting in ambush, now ready to strike some hapless and unsuspecting prey, which is everyone! The fate of characters in tragic literature and of men and women in life and likewise the fate love is perched in a manner ever so fragile on a little core of sanity and compassion. In the words of the poet, then, Come Up and Be Dead is a fitting spot to love's grave. The theme of the novel is attempt of the females
to break the walls, which constrain them in all matters and all attempts go in vain the following lines makes the theme very clear,

She remembered how, the first time she had seen the wall, the thought had come to her.... I must break down that wall. Get the girls out of it. I wouldn't dare to say that now, she thought. I know we have to break out own walls. Devayani... has she been able to do that? Has she got out at last? And I....?" She went in and found the girl at her books. Looking at her absorbed face, she thought... yes, it is over. Even as we speak, the present becomes the past and slides away from us. And we have to let it go (1983: 265).

In these reflections on Deshpande's novel, one must now consider other aspects of her art and craft as a novelist. As mentioned earlier, the novel begins briskly and sets a pace with a dynamic of its own. The plot and its various strands are introduced; the major and the minor characters are brought in at the right moment in the development of the plot; early enough in the novel the thematic concerns of the novelist are stated. However, the middle portion of the novel moves at a slower tempo. Once the chain of events in presented carefully, it appears as though the novel must make room for discursive thought and ratiocination. Even as the school is shrill and clamorous in the wake of what has happened, the reader is too frequently asked to shift gears, as it were, and look into the past of characters like Kshama, Devayani and Pratap. The upbringings of these, the roles played by their parents, their parent's sexuality, etc., are made much of. All of which has little or no significance for the plot of Come Up and Be Dead The theme of sibling rivalry and conflicts is brought up; but it is not adequately integrated into the more pressing concerns of Come Up and Be Dead Also, in the mode of narration, the novel shifts from first person to
third person and back to first person quite frequently. These changes are
either organically justifiable nor are they indicated by any recognizable
symbol, strategy or manner of speech. There seems to be no coherent or
compelling aesthetic need. This has a 'staccato' effect on the novel. Some
attention needs to be paid to Deshpande's usage of English. First, it would
appear (in the absence of any evidence to the contrary) that she has an
inexplicable obsession with the word "small" Consider these examples from
Come Up and Be Dead.

The mesh door swurg back behind him with a small whine (1983: 57). Sona gave a small jump on the bed (65). There was a
small frown on his face (128). A small trail of blood ran from his
nose (139). I said in a small voice (151). There was a small
silence (197). I'd go and have a small talk with her father (199).
"My mother," he said with a small smile (210). the distance...
between the spectators and them. seemed very small (214).
There was a small moan which I recognized as my own (235).
Then, with a small smile... (242). The few small moments of
happiness I had snatched (249).

One dozen quotations exactly, the emphasis, needless to say, has been
added! The reader can easily draw his own conclusions. But, may one ask,
whatever happened to words like tiny, diminutive, miniature (to suggest
size), scanty, meager, inadequate (to suggest quantity), little, trivial,
shallow, inessential (to suggest insignificance), short, brief (to suggest
length), weak, faint (to suggest incapacity?). Secondly, there is the matter of
incorrect prepositions. Here are just two instances, "I'm sticking my neck
out with this appointment (3). "There was no anxiety on her face" (45).
Thirdly, what follows is a miscellaneous list illustrating the author's usage
and grammar and it clearly indicates a departure from what one normally
encounters, "His lips tightened, sending a spoke of lines around the old
mouth" (4). Whether the mouth is old or young, what is "a spoke of lines"? ... A two minutes silence..." (1983: 7). Whatever happened to the hyphen and the apostrophe?

You can disperse," she said (10). Is it not, "You may disperse?" "And I... the 7th and the 8th is good enough for me" (17). It's is, is it? ... I had not option but to go in (47). Or is it choice?... ill-at-easiness (53). A neologism? "I will go straight to the point" (82). Does one go or come?... but there was no help for it 176). That is, it could not be helped! He looked just thoughtful no more (199).

No comment. How does not justify these departures? Even if such usage is 'consciously' adopted, what is the reason? Deshpande herself does not offer any explanation. Even in the published accounts of the interviews she has given, there is no reference to her usage of English. But her usage does seem odd. Come Up and Be Dead is a novel replete with literary allusions and direct references: Shakespeare, Dickens, Charlotte Bronte, Wilkie Collins, Chekhov, J.M. Synge, Harper Lee, Tagore and 'The Bible'. While Dickens and, to some extent, Bronte are largely assimilated into the ethos of the novel, one cannot say the same about the rest. Names of authors and their books are just scattered along the way. That is all. However, some attention must be paid to the references to Dickens and in particular his novel, Our Mutual Friend (1865). Half way through Come Up and Be Dead Davayani muses somewhat disingenuously,

But I was neither daughter nor wife nor mother now. What was I then? Nothing? In a sense, it was restful to be nothing. And yet there was this feeling too.... I might as well as be dead. Come up and be dead... who had said that? (119).
And, again, the same reference towards the end of the novel,

Come up and be dead, come up and be dead...." The words came to me once again, as they had before. And now, this time, when it didn't matter any more, I remembered that it was Dickens' golden-haired Jenny Wren who had aid them (1983: 247).

While a full comparison and contrast between Come Up and Be Dead and Our Mutual Friend is not warranted here, it is clear that Deshpande's novel breathes the same air of dark doings, grave suspicion, mendacious world of crime, death and the stench of dead bodies. The image as well as the phenomenon of death traverses through the pages of Our Mutual Friend, as it does through the pages of Come Up and Be Dead even if at a reduced intensity in the latter. In Dickens's novel, as Angus Wilson has argued, everything hinges on the corruption of nearly all the individual characters by money in some form or another and that it is a world in which money is just a means, simply a feverish way of getting through life. Deshpande's novel echoes the old master's voice considerably. Dickens's narrative arrives at least some sense of a renewal of life through suffering and through a kind of purgation. Looking at Kshama in the last pages of Come Up and Be Dead one senses her purgation and renewal, her determination to see her undertaking through,

She stood there watching the evening sunlight sparks in the bits of glass that spiked the wall. She remembered how, the first time she had seen the wall, the thought had come to her.... I must break down that wall. Get the girls out of it (265).

Walls must come down, chains that bind must go. Mere glint and sparkle aren't enough, especially when they remind one of spiked fences. A
careful analysis of other literary allusions and references (in terms of sources, influences, impact and parallels and similarities) cannot be attempted here, although without it any consideration of *Come Up and Be Dead* will remain incomplete. Deshpande uses all poetic devices to colour her message with so that they can be effectively passed on to the readers. In conveying the message. She does not forget that she is an artist and not a preacher or a rebel.

Despite the lapses in the novel (which cannot be wished away!), Deshpande, having portrayed a world of evil, squalor and vice, dealing as she does with death and tragedy, with mystery and mischief, she has pushed *Come Up and Be Dead* beyond the ‘genre’ of a mere whodunit. Despite, also, certain tentativeness of manner and tone, her characters and situations are eerie and of enduring interest.

The title of the novel as suggested by the protagonist has flown out from Dickens character jennywren. Kshama Rao thought that she has been brought here to die. The offer of the job of the school principle to a helpless female like Kshama Rao is no doubt a praise worthy venture but the question is the job brings along with it a lot of tension hardens challenges etc. Because the principle is the academic leader of the school and the leaders like is quite challenging and risky. Can woman like Kshama Rao fit in to the job, here Kshama Rao stands for all women? She is a true representative of women who live in a world dominated by man. And in a situation which is very hostile to her existence, she has to project her identity and create a niche for herself in the society. Kshama Rao works at a place, where the boss is the male implying the final authority still lies in man’s hand and a woman is nearly treated as a puppet. Which is made to
dance as per the tunes created by boss? Kshama Rao has to conform to the norms and rules set out by male boss and through her the boss controls women's world. This is the place where Kshama Rao working is an education institute men for girls. So the school can be treated as woman's world in the present contest.

In the world of women a lot of case and precaution is required to be taken. Everything has to be done very thoughtfully or it may ruin the privacy of women and perhaps women can not tolerate if their privacy is interrupted. The kinds of women protagonist depicted by Shashi Deshpande belong to what Elaine Showalter terms as feminist phase. According to showalter this is the phase when woman protest against male dominated but finally has to make a compromise. Most of the female characters of Deshpande fall in to this category. Parents of mridula in the novel could not and did not raise much hue energies over the death of their daughter because their privacy concern was to protect the privacy of regarding Mridulas character which is directly related to the family image. In traditional Indian society the misdemeanor of a female child is allegedly responsible for the disgrace and defemission the family. This is not case with male child. The discrimination between sexes blatantly practiced in society is clearly manifest here. And perhaps Deshpande seeks to highlight through her work.

Kshama Rao's conversion with the doctors is quiet interesting in the sense that the doctor had to follow the call of his wife in the most disharting manner the call of his wife is a thing which can neither be rejected nor followed hole heartily,
I knew he was thinking of his wife. I saw her standing there, waiting for him, looking both fragile and vulnerable without him. "I've got to go on," he said wildly. "She'd do quiet well without you, you know," I said, purposefully cruel. Women are tougher than you think. No, I can't leave her and go. And there was such sorrow in his voice, it was as if he was speaking, not of Love and happiness but of a burden that had to be carried, that could not be abandoned (1983: 250).

What Deshpande is trying to drive home is the point that the relationship between husband and wife because so insipid, dull and rutten that none of the party can show real interest in each other thus monotony in characterize husband wife - relationship in most of the Indian families to get over such monotonous and dull situation. People of even high rank choose to indulge in sex trades or private sexual escapades the chairman of the school, it is evil at the end of the novel, had molested Mridula and killed her for fear of being defamed.

The description of this event in the novel is so mind boggling, Kshama Rao could not trust it initially that a high profile man like Varma could indulging such a foul practice, But this was a fact.

It was Mridula who told me about that boy, Sanjay – Sharmila's friend. He took her with him, she said to this place, open Sesame. They had dinner together then he took her to a room. There was another man there, she said and they had something to eat and drink with him. They must have got the girl drunk; I suppose, for the next thing she remembered was that she was alone in that room with the strange man. And also she realised that something had happened to her. Well, when she told me that, I linked it with something a man had said to me once... that if you were willing to pay, you could get virgins... high – class virgins, he called them... at a certain hotel in this place. Then I knew I was on to something big. I went to this boy
Sanjay and told him what I knew. And that for a price I would be silent. The next thing was that I was called up by the big chief himself... “Who was it?” I asked again, knowing I was sealing my own fate by asking the question (1983: 251-252).

Why a great man like Varma could revert such primitives sexuality is not disclosed by the novelist but probably the reason is social inhibition sex is tabbed in our society to think and talk about sex is suppose to be immoral in our society which is inhabited by sex. People are sex – starved and them any sense of suppression this animal desire and instinct in man would certainly would prove disastrous to the moral values and ethics of the society. That is why a radical feminist like Shobha De preface talk openly of sex. In her novels secrets sex affairs do no longer exists there is no privacy in sexual matters. The novelist allows her protagonist to enjoy sex freely boldly and without any sense of inferiority and defemission and the novelist, Deshpande through same hints regarding the possibility of free sex in the years to come. Woman is the gift of God who is blessed by honesty sincerity and trust worthiness. Woman whether she is educated our illiterate the mind, body and the soul is the same. If we speak about educated woman, she is quite conscious towards her body and soul in particular her relationship with others. Because she thinks that she has the right to disclose her inner voice with a open and bold manner. She is firm on her decisions like the rock. Due to this reason she is caught in the world of male dominated society. She tries to find out her origin and roots under the deep shadow of tradition and culture.
Works Cited


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3.2 Roots and shadows
A modern woman is an educated. She is in contact with society. She is dealing with the varied issues like love, sex, marriage, settlement and individuality. Her major attempt is to assert her individuality and realize her freedom. She is modern not in her outlook but in her vision. That directs her to walk with the time. That also guides to make the fruitful relationship between husband and wife. \textit{Roots and Shadows}, Shashi Deshpande's full length novel, is about the struggle of the protagonist Indu – representative of the educated middle class woman as to how her assertion of her individuality to achieve freedom leads to her confrontation with her family and the male dominated society. Feeling smothered in an oppressive male dominated and tradition bound society, she attempts to explore her inner self to assert her individuality. Married to Jayant, Indu freely moves with Naren and uses words like “kiss”, “rape”, “deflowered”, “orgasm” etc (1983: 82). In her conversation with Naren, Indu says.

\begin{quote}
We're gay and whimsical about our own people, our own country. We are rational, unprejudiced, broad minded. We discuss intelligently, even solemnly, the problems of unemployment, poverty, corruption, family planning. We scorn the corrupt, we despise the ignorant, we hate the wicked.... And our hearts bleed, Naren, for Vietnam, for the blacks, for the Harijans.... But frankly, we don't care a damn. Not one goddam about anything but our own precious selves, our own precious walled-in lives (25).
\end{quote}

Indu searches for the way of release from the constraints of the traditional and tradition-bound institution of marriage. She is in search of an autonomous self, only to realize. The only self that can be achieved is the self born in interpersonal relationships that make Indu to cry out in agony,
This is my real sorrow. That I can never be complete in myself.... 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 (1983: 31).

Indu's quest for personhood and fulfillment, she had sought escape from family relationships, but had discovered how relationships are the roots of one's being and follow one like so many shadows that make life no more substantial than a shadow—a life without identity. Indu's flight from family relationships had only landed her in another trap of shadow existence waiting for her in the person of Jayant. "I've got away. But to what? ... to what have I got away? Is that any better than this?" (160). She asks Naren referring to her relationship with Jayant. Anguished, she wonders: "Are we doomed to living meaningless futile lives? Is there no escape?" (160).

In marrying Jayant, Indu had thought that she had found her alter ago, had found in him a spiritual and psychological level of closeness. She tells us, "I had become complete. 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" (114). But marriage with Jayant had forced her to realize that self is an elusive centre, that one could never exchange roots with another—that this was an illusion 'a chimera' and Indu felt 'cheated.'

Through the character of Indu, Deshpande is portraying the inner struggle of an artist to express herself, to discover her real self through her inner and instinctive potentiality, i.e. creative writing. Indu wants to bid adieu to her monotonous service-life but her husband, Jayant, is not one with her. He is a barrier to her feminine urge for self-expression since he
believes that a person like Indu can do nothing against the whose 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 (1983: 17).

There can be noticed a diametrically opposite temperaments of the husband and the wife. One is sympathetic to the ills of the society, the ‘system’ as Deshpande puts it, whereas the other is nonchalant. One is a 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. Hence, she had not asked Jayant, “To go where?” (18). Instead she had silently gone back to her work, hating it and hating herself. Her self-alienation increases as she becomes aware of the contradiction between 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. Jean Miller observes that, “when one is an object, not a subject, all of one's own psychical and sexual impulses and interests are presumed not to exist independently” (1983: 63). But why doesn't Indu ask Jayant? It is because, she is hedged in, she is incarcerated, unable to go on through the ordeal of life and “feeling trapped” (Roots, 1983: 18), seeing herself “endlessly chained” (18) to the long dusty road they lay ahead of me”(18). But with 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 (1983: 18).

In fact 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 her domestic role as a submissive housewife. She has to become a 'society lady' as Shobha De would put it. In the Starry Nights But there also, woman is a meek and yielding creature. Centuries of traditional social ethos have made her so and she takes pride in such suffering. But we do not find Indu expressing such pride in her suffering. She cannot bear with the suffering she had to face in the family and hence she breaks away from it and marries Jayant. In the family she was an incomplete being, without a sense of the wholeness of personality. But with Jayant she feels a sense of completion and wholeness. But Indu is unable to attain wholeness and the integration of personality? She is often haunted by an “usual feeling of total dis-orientation” (33). An outsider, she remains untouched by the milieu. She opens her heart,

For some reason I was an outsider. The waves of sorrow, sympathy and comradeship rippled all around me, but left me untouched (Camus, 1983: 30).

Her feeling of isolation from the milieu is almost Camuesque. One is reminded of Albert Camus' The Outsider. Meursault says,

Mother died today. Or may be yesterday. I don't know. I had a telegram from the home: 'Mother passed away. Funeral tomorrow. Yours Sincerely'. That doesn't mean anything (1983: 09).
Such a state also reminds us of Sartre's Roquentin, who is unable to share the collective joy of the Bouvillois, stands alone: “But, after all, it was their Sunday, not mine” (Nausea, 1965: 81). Not only that, Roquentin also feels “so far away from them” (224). This is an instance of total disorientation and isolation from which Indu too suffers. Often, we find in the novel references to her 'loneliness', suggested through the image of “dust and barrenness” (1983: 10) and “dark room” (21).

Then we are out. It is dusty, a totally barren place. The glare and the heat are both fierce. I am alone now and move among people I don't know.... I had rejected the family, tried to draw a magic circle around Jayant and myself. I had pulled in my boundaries.... 'I am alone' (10).

And again Indu’s disorientation finds expression when she says: “Our own people? Who are they? Where do I draw the boundary?” (11). Indu reckons her roots in breaking away from the family but she ultimately discovers that these family-bonds are the root of one's being and keep on dogging one like shadows. In fact these roots are the shadows. Shadows that one can't flee from; “We flatter ourselves that we've escaped the compulsions of the past; but we're still pinioned to it by little things” (34). Even the trifles and trivial, which dog her like shadows uproot her from her social moorings. As a woman, Indu is hardly left with any choice. Her life is so acutely circumscribed that, she cannot make quick decisions and hence fails to arrive at concrete determinations.

Inner strength.... I thought of the words as I looked down on Mini's bowed head. A woman's life, they had told me, contained no choices. And all my life, specially in this house, I had seen
the truth of this. The woman had no choice but to submit, to accept. And I had often wondered... have they been born without wills, or have their wills atrophied through a lifetime of disuse? (1983: 06).

Indu recognizes her displacement and marginalization as a woman, 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 for articulation but also brought silence, dullness and repulsion to the houses these women live in,

The house was silent, as if tired of its pretence of liveliness. A few women who had been left behind, and who had been carrying on an interminable argument in the kitchen, their voices, rising and falling monotonously, were now hustled out by an authoritative male voice (06).

Women like Indu can neither express themselves nor choose for themselves. They can neither love nor hate but be content with “the gift of silence” (33). Silence is the result of the hopelessness in life. It symbolises the despair that overcomes the consciousness after being rejected or suppressed for a very long time. It is adopted as the will to fight is given up. This Silence is haunted by the despondency of life. Without any hope and has a strong sense of defeatism. That marriage had taught them.

Indu is projected against the women belonging to the older generation. Thus, the writer has very artistically juxtaposed two sets of women in the Indian set-up. One set is represented by Akka, Narmada, Sumitra Kaki, Kamla Kaki, Atya, Sunanda Atya; and the other set is represented by Indu. To the old generation, a woman’s life is nothing “but to get married, to bear children, to have sons and then grandchildren”
(1983: 116). And the ideal woman is the one who doesn’t have her own independent identity, “A woman who sheds her ‘I’ who loses her identity in her husband’s” (49). The new generation (here represented by Indu) reviews everything with reason. Indu analyses the ideal of detachment and freedom and tries to achieve these. She tries to listen to the voice of her conscience and revolts. But, unfortunately, in all her efforts, she fails miserably either due to the impact of the culture and tradition, or fear of stigma, or timidity or all these combined together.

Besides being an educated young woman, Indu is very sensitive to the situations. She aspires to become independent and complete in herself but finds so many hurdles coming in her way. She finds dominant Akka and her family to be a great hindrance to achieving her goal of attaining independence and completeness. When she studies in the college, Akka doesn’t allow her to meet the boys and cultivate friendship with them. So, later on, Indu leaves the house and gets married to Jayant, who is her own choice. That she leaves one house and enters another to be independent and complete, but ironically enough, soon she realizes the futility of her decisions. “Jayant and I.... I wish I could say we have achieved complete happiness. But I cannot fantasize” (13). She speaks about her own incompleteness thus, “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” (31).

Indu laughs at the idea of not calling one’s husband by his name as it shortens the age of the husband. Later, she realizes that she too is not different from other women as she always wants Jayant to be with her. The
only difference is her reason for thinking so. After she gets married, she does all the activities which her husband would like. She herself notices,

When I look in the mirror, I think of Jayant, when I dress I think of Jayant, when I undress I think of him. Always what he wants, what he would like, what would please him. And I can't blame him. It is not he who has pressurized me into this. It is the way I want it to be.... Have I become fluid, with no shape, no form of my own (1983: 49).

Perhaps, marriage has taught her the things like deception and artificial show, "Her desire to assert herself had driven her from affection to hypocrisy." Indu herself realizes, "I had learnt to reveal to Jayant nothing but what he wanted to hear.... I hid my responses and emotions as if they were bits of garbage" (38). All these bitter facts of losing her identity into her husband's frighten and scare her. The paradox of the situation is that she is not happy with Jayant, but at the same time, she cannot live without him. She has achieved completeness with Jayant but she does not want this sort of completeness. She discovers that Naren is attempting to dominate her. Naren like traditional male does not care for her strong concern for individuality and independence. Even in love-making, he does not wait for his wife's response. In a sense he begins to treat his wife (Indu) as his property which he has a right to possess.

At one point in the novel when Naren tries to make love with her, she declares, "It is one man and one man alone" (89). But, later, she offers herself twice to Naren. And then the question haunts her how she will view the act of adultery. Immediately after the act, she goes to her own bed, but deliberately avoids sleeping as it would erase in the intervening time what happened between Naren and Indu. On the one hand, she does not take
love-making is a sin or crime, but on the other hand, the very next day, she starts thinking of the enormity of what she had done.

Adultery.... What nuances of wrong doing... no, it needs the other stronger word... what nuances of sin the word carries. I will now brood on my sin, be crushed under a weight of guilt and misery (1983: 155).

Indu tries to reason out each and every action. Her mind starts musing over the reasons for giving her body to Naren. And, further, her mind on the matters of sin, crime, right and wrong can be seen as under,

Apart from wronging Jayant? Wronging Jayant? I winced at the thought. But had I not wronged Jayant even before this? By pretending, by giving him a spurious coin instead of the genuine kind? I had cheated him of my true self. That, I thought, dishonourable, dishonest, much more than this, what I have done with Naren (171).

Indu doesn't believe in love. To her there is no such thing as "love" (157) in real life though it exists in books and movies. According to her, "it is a big fraud" (157). It is not the only thing in life. And if somebody believes in it, he or she is trapped and becomes humble and dependent. The concept of love is false for Indu, so Naren asks her what the truth is. At this her answer is,

The sexual instinct.... That is true. The material instinct... that is true too. Self interest, self love... they are the basic truths, you remember Devdas? I saw it with some friends. They sobbed when he died for love, but I could have puked. A grown man moaning and crying for love. God! How disgusting! (158).
Marriage is a fate traditionally sanctioned to women by society. But marriage is not the same thing to a man as to a woman. The two sexes are different from each other, though one has the necessity of the other. De Beauvoir observes, "...this necessity has never brought about a condition of reciprocity between them; women have never constituted a caste making exchanges and contrasts with the male caste upon a footing of equality" (The Second Sex, 1974: 446). A woman like Indu is allowed no direct influence upon her husband, neither upon the future nor upon the world. She has to reach out beyond herself towards the social milieu only through her husband. But does the husband allow? He is impervious and indifferent to her emotional urges. Instead, it is Indu who has to cater to the needs of his inner urges and drives,

But my marriage had taught me this too. I had found in myself an immense capacity for deception. I had learnt to reveal to Jayant nothing but what he wanted to see. I hid my responses and emotions as if they were bits of garbage (1983: 38).

In such a situation, Indu feels alienated from Jayant. To Ann Foreman, women experience themselves as the fulfillment of other people's needs.

Men seek relief from their alienation through their relations with women; for women there is no relief. For these intimate relations are the very ones that are the essential structures of her oppression (102).

Indu is interested in creative writing – a means to articulate her feminine voice, to forge moments in art that are arresting and original. To this Jayant says 'No' because they need money and they have a long way to
go but “To go where?” (1983: 18). Indu could not ask for she had no right to ask. It is the authoritative husband who has to say and not a meekly submissive wife like her. O.P. Bhatnagar rightly remarks.

... the novel deals with a woman's attempt to assert her individuality and realize her freedom. It depicts how it brings her into confrontation with family, with male-dominated society (1991: 118-129).

Jayant betrays her hopes for harmony and integration, for peace and happiness. He fails to be her 'alter ego'. “Neither is he 'a sheltering tree',” (Long Silence, 1988: 32), to protect her in weal and woe. Instead she finds that she has relinquished her identity by surrendering before Jayant's masculinity, by becoming his wife. Willingly she yields to the demands of marriage and moulds herself up to the dictates of her husband. But she never blames him for it is men who 'tear' and woman who 'bear'. Indu exists and yet does not exist. There are women in our society who hate the rearing of a child. They are simply sex objects who produce children and leave them to their helpless lot. Indu is one such woman who does not believe in mothering. She is woman who 'bears' and not the one who 'rears'. In an act of unreflecting defiance against patriarchy, she believes that a woman should deprive herself of the satisfaction that comes from not only bearing a child but also playing a major role in her personal developments. In this sense she is an anti-radical feminist. She says, “Having children... it isn't something you should think and plan about. You should just have them. And yes... end up like Sunanda Atya. Pure, female animal” (1983: 115).

Probably Indu believes that a female's job is only to produce and breed and to take care of the offspring's growth and development is the
look-out of the male. This seems to be a blot on her feminist. A fluid character as she is, Indu, willingly bears all and acts up to the expectations of her husband.

Marriage subjugates and enslaves woman. It leads her to “aimless days indefinitely repeated, life that slips away gently towards death without questioning its purpose” (De Beauvoir, 1974: 500). Women pay for their happiness at the cost of their freedom. Simone De Beauvoir emphasized that such a sacrifice on the part of a woman is too high for anyone since the kind of self-contentment and security that marriage offers. Woman drains her soul of its capacity for greatness,

She shuts behind her the doors of her new home. When she was a girl, the whole countryside was her homeland; the forests were hers. Now she is confined to a restricted space... (502).

Indu, true to her feminine virtues, 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 (creative) potentiality. Regarding a woman’s role-playing, Rosemarie Tong observes,

Sometimes women play their roles not so much because they want to, as because they have to in order to survive economically and/or psychologically. Virtually all women engage in the feminine role playing (1993: 208).

Jaya is discontented with this pre-ordained role of a woman. She has so many choices but for a married woman like her, she is left with a few or
practically no choice save what her husband wills and desires. She cannot unburden herself. Her feminine instinct is curbed and suppressed. Despite all these, she is reluctant to admit failure and drugs on with her marital life which encloses and 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” (1983: 79).

Even in her professional life too, she has to curtail her freedom and submit to the dictates of the editor. She cannot give up her job which fails to be self-satisfactory. Jayant wants her to compromise with the profession of a writer. But could she compromise? The uncompromising Indu surrenders at times before Jayant just for show only. She is the very embodiment of the feminist principle which is an uncompromising pledge and an antidote to exploitation and oppression of woman. This uncompromising stance that Indu assumes is ventilated through her dialogic imagination. Woman like Indu are alienated from the product upon which they work: their body. Tong further observes,

A woman may say that she diets, exercises, and dresses for herself, but in reality she is probably shaping and adorning her flesh for men. A woman has little or no say about when, where, how or by whom her body will be used (Feminist Thought, 1993: 187).

Whatever Indu does, it is only to please Jayant, and to please him is her way of life, “Now, I dress the way I want. As I please! ... As I please? No, that’s not true” (1983: 49). A woman’s responding and relating to other’s needs may detract her from her own sense of identity, of her becoming so fluid as to assume any shape. Indu feels as if she had become so fluid that
she has no tangible shape, no form of her own. Without wants of her own, what is her identity in the family? Indu minus the "I" of course renders her an ideal woman, "a woman who sheds her "I" who loses her identity in her husband's" (1983: 49), a woman who bears everything without a drop of tear. Marriage has reduced Indu to a state of "total self surrender" (52). Through Indu, Deshpande voices her views of marriage,

It's a trap... that's what marriage is. A trap? Or a cage?... a cage with two trapped animals glaring hatred at each other... isn't so wrong after all. And it's not a joke, but a tragedy. But what animal would cage itself? (60-61).

In feminine fiction Waugh expresses, women's experience is primarily defined through interpersonal, usually domestic and filial relationships; serving the needs of others. Her identity exists, "largely as being-for-others (needing to please; narcissist vanity and deriving security from her intimacy with others) rather than being-for-itself" (Waugh, 1989: 43). Indu experiences herself as a woman given to physical narcissism in her self-reflexive concern with the body often "looking in the mirror" (1983: 49), thus trimming herself up to please Jayant, to please her narcissist self. She loves being "looked at" (55). In this context, it is quite relevant to note what John Berger says,

A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself.... She has to survey everything she is and everything she does.... Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another.... Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at.... The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus, she turns herself into a object - and most
Major Thematic Concerns in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande


Indu loathes womanhood for it is trusted upon a girl and for its association with the idea of “unclean” (1983: 79). In order to assert her right to an independent existence, she longs to escape from the burden and responsibilities of womanhood. She fears her becoming a mother and hence scorns her “introduction to the beautiful world of being a woman” (79). Tell me Indu,

why do you fight against your womanhood so much?” Do I? My womanhood... I had never thought of it until the knowledge had been thrust brutally, gracelessly thrust on me the day I had grown up. “You’re a woman now,” Kaki had told me. “You can have babies yourself”. I, a woman? My mind had flung off the thought with an amazing swiftness... felt an immense hatred for it. “And don’t forget”, she had ended, “for four days now you are unclean. You can’t touch anyone or anything (78-79).

Indu fails to establish emotional rapport with Jayant for “it shocks him to find passion in a woman. It puts him off” (83). She confesses to Naren,

When I’m like that, he turns away from me. I’ve learnt my lesson now. And so I pretend, I'm passive. And unresponsive. I'm still and dead. And now, when you tried to kiss me, I thought... this is Jayant. So that’s all I am, Naren. Not a pure woman. Not a too faithful wife. But an anachronism. A woman who loves her husband too much. Too passionately. And is ashamed of it (83).

Such is the paradoxical situation in which Indian women are enmeshed. Like Indu they lead ambivalent lives. They cherish within their hearts deep
and profound love but when the occasion comes for expressing it they retrace. Willing to wound, they hesitate to strike. They are loyal and obedient women who have been nourished and reared by a traditionally bogged society. Indu says,

As a child they had told me. I must be obedient and unquestioning. As a girl, they had told me. I must be meek and submissive. Why? I had asked. Because you are a female. You must accept everything, even defeat, with grace because you are a girl, they had said. It is the only way, they said, for a female to live and survive (1983: 158).

But as said earlier, Indu is a woman of free thinking; her thoughts are with the coming generation of women steeped in a scientific rational way of life. She has her own say to what people say,

And I... I had watched them and found it to be true. There had to be, if not the substance, at least the shadow of submission. But still, I had laughed at them, and sworn I would never pretend to be what I was not (158).

Should woman as passive characters put on a hypocritical stance towards themselves as well as the society? Should they out of fear for the male put on the mask of unreasonable submission? These are the questions that the society puts before the dominating male. Woman as a subordinate sex is characterized by obedience and submission, and under male dominance women have “developed a tendency to prevail by passive means” (Klein, 1989: 167). Women surrender before men whom they really love. But does Indu submit before Jayant’s masculinity because she loves him? No. Indu is scornful of love. To her “love is a big fraud, a hoax, that’s what it
is.... It's false" (1983: 157). She surrenders since she did "not want conflict" (159). She had clung tenaciously to Jayant, to her marriage "not for love, alone" (159), but because she was "afraid of failure" (159). She wanted to show to the family and the world that her marriage was a success and so she had put on the mask of an obedient and subservient wife,

And so I went on lying, even to myself, compromising, shedding bits of myself along the way. Which meant that I, who had despised Devdas for being a coward, was the same thing myself. I had killed myself as surely as he had done (159).

Indu's problematic of 'becoming' expresses Deshpande's feminist polemics against sexual and gender roles imposed upon women in a patriarchal culture. Such 'relative identity', or rather the 'received role models' distort and problematic her self-perception. Such a world reduces women like Indu to a mere thing or a mind-less body. With her peremptory and subjugating voice, her feminine instinct for articulation is suppressed. Ever ready to please Jayant, Indu acquiesces to his wills and desires and does everything to reflect his image. Indu gradually realizes that she doesn't exist for her but for Jayant, that archetypal male imperialistic and subjugating. She feels in her a sense of existential angst and insecurity. Look at a fear-stricken and lacerated woman railing at her family and the males world where a girl is "never claimed" but is "set apart from the others" (81),

This is my family. These are my people. And yet... I hate them. I despise them. They're mean and petty and trivial and despicable. I had always told myself... I won't be like them. I won't live like them. And I thought... I've got away. But to what, Naren... Are we doomed to living meaningless futile
lives? Is there no escape? I'm afraid, Naren... I'm afraid... (1983:
159-160).

The roots of all her psychological problems of feelings of "not only
futility," but of "utter vacuity," of "emptiness," and of "nothingness, in the
midst of nothingness" (106), is her love-hate relationship with Jayant -
Jayant whom she wanted, and at the same moment hated for wanting so
much. That Jayant who had swept her off her feet in their very first meeting
and given her a feeling of solidity and certainly, a feeling of having found
her "alter ego" (38). Instead, marriage to him had compelled in her a duality
of life. "I had found in myself," she confesses, "an immense capacity for
deception... (38).

A marriage that suppresses her femininity and her human demands, a
marriage that denies her fullness of experience forces Indu to declare to
Naren, who alone that "love is a big fraud" (157). She had built round
herself and discovers herself to herself as herself, and with whom she
experiences, an intense moment of extra-marital love, a moment of love that
reaches her to the roots of her being and awakens her feminine
consciousness to the core of her femininity. And therefore Devdas, Sarat
Chandra's love-lorn tragic hero is for her repulsive she says, "A grown man
moaning and crying for love! God! How disgusting! " (158).

Indu is only human in her distaste for love that is non-real and
absurd, and love that lacks the humanizing influence in the context of
marriage in a masculine civilization, a civilization that perpetuates myths
created by male-oriented societies and makes marriage for the female
partner, both physically and spiritually dissatisfying. Indu confesses the
moral risks of a woman caught in the trap of a love marriage with a
traditional culture-created man of restrictive social code, an 'automation' therefore, 'plugged' into a social system that he does not question – a man who destroys her respect for him by the callousness with which he takes her for granted and by his obliviousness to her human needs. Indu articulates her sexual confusion,

Jayant... too expected me to submit. No, not expected. He took it for granted that I would. And I did it, because I told myself, I loved him. As if that justified everything. As if the word took away the taint from the deed. And remembering how I had surrendered to him step by step I realise now, that it was not for love, as I had been telling myself, but because I did not want conflict. The hideous ghost of my own cowardice confronted me as I thought of this... that I had clung tenaciously to Jayant, to my marriage, not for love alone, but because I was afraid of failure. I had to show them that my marriage, that I was a success. Show whom? The world. The family of course. And so I went on lying, even to myself, compromising, shedding bits of myself along the way which meant that I who had despised Devdas for being a coward, was the same thing myself. I had killed myself as surely as he had done (1983: 158-159).

Indu's love-marriage degenerates into a mere psychological affair that makes her feel “as if there was something shameful in total commitment,” (130), as if she has abused her body's sanctity. Jayant, the archetypal Indian husband, is shocked “to find passion in a woman. By refusing to accept Indu's real self, her human self, Jayant forces in her a state of armed neutrality to life with him and mars the felicity of their relationship. She explains her frustration, her disappointment and her humiliation to Naren, the only person to whom she can open up, "I've learnt my lesson now. And so I pretend I'm passive. And unresponsive. I am still and dead.... Not a pure

Yet Jayant possesses her being. Indu tells us how "good fortune" for her means "this above all. That Jayant should be with me. Always, all the time, forever" (36), and how without him she feels "cold and alone and bereft," Back in her ancestral home, there is a moment of "even joy" but Indu wishes, "if only Jayant were here..." (34). She is therefore compelled to accept old uncle's theories, "All things are connected. Yes, they are. Which is why no one can be completely free, Freedom has to be relative" (14). And also "Attachment... we can't escape it. It's the law of life. You can never protect yourself against love" (108). The tragedy of Indu's situation is that both meaning and meaninglessness are because of Jayant. With Jayant 'joy' is joy, without him 'even joy' seems incomplete. And yet it is Jayant who has made an 'anachronism' of her, and created confusion in her mind about her womanhood.

The homecoming theme becomes a symbolic instrument and a crucial process for Deshpande's protagonists to regain inner balance to declare their independence, to stake out their own identity. The importance of the house in this case, Indu's struggle for selfhood, her struggle towards liberation of the mind, her struggle for an emotional and intellectual definition of herself as a self-actualizing person, is in a sense a fight against her womanhood, "As a woman," Indu tells Naren, "I felt hedged in, limited by my sex. I resented my womanhood because it closed so many doors to me" (79). Fullness of experience for a woman, in a traditional-bound society, that is used to looking upon marriage as woman's "ultimate destiny" (79).
How to reconcile woman’s human demand for freedom with her need for love, ‘nurturance’ and how to strike a balance between her wifehood, motherhood and career and spiritual fulfillment are some of the issues raised by Shashi Deshpande in *Roots and Shadows*. Indu refuses to be mother of a child that is not wholly welcome (though she acknowledges the truth of the maternal instinct) – in a marriage that has become non-real because love is non-real – in a marriage that therefore makes her feel trapped in a negative situation since it threatens her positive struggle for independence, for selfhood, and her effort at intellectual liberation. Jayant will not submit to her resignation from a job that is not fulfilling and that demands compromises – she tells Naren, When I had first told Jayant about my plans... that I would give up my job and give myself to writing, he had been unbelieving. Then, confident of his influence over me, he had been sure I would change. Later, when he realized this would not happen, he had been furious. And bewildered, “As if I had cheated him” (1983: 171), and had advised compromise,

That’s life! What can one person do against the whole system! No point making yourself ridiculous with futile gestures. We need the money, don’t we? Don’t forget, we have a long way to go (17).

In the male dominated society woman cannot exercise her will. It is man who controls her and determines what a woman should do. Man does that not in the interest woman, but more because it would satisfy his male ego that would make his stronghold upon woman more absolute. Indu is dissuaded from resigning the job, in a large measure because; Jayant’s voice should be given supremacy and not because of any economic considerations.
The conflict situation of Indu's marriage, her awakened consciousness, her confused psyche in the face of it and the consequent emotion-rooted ambivalent attitude towards love and marriage suggest how for a woman as a woman, realization of self can only be a self in conflict. Talking about her predicament in her relationship with Jayant, Indu says,

What I feel for Jayant... can I compress all of it within this word? (love). It is much more, so overwhelming a response of the whole of me to him. Sometimes I wonder if I will leave him one day and live by myself. The only way in which I can be myself, my whole self again. I have often toyed with the idea, I even worked it out into a short story once, in which a young woman leaves her husband and goes away. And when a third person, a common friend, asks her why, she says, "Because I love him too much" (1983: 88-89).

It is Naren, who by his touch of love discovered Indu to herself, gave her the experience of release from shadow existence and be her 'real' self, now through his attitude towards love helps her find "one more piece of the jigsaw puzzle" (89), that her life with Jayant and become. Naren, through his acceptance of her rejection, makes her realize that what she wanted was not "this hardness, this very not-caring but involvement. I wanted involvement, not detachment" (89). "Detachment... it was for the dead, not the living" (186), and hence she would never 'hanker' after detachment, that ideal which had meant freedom from all relationships, and which had been a pre-condition for fulfillment and selfhood.

But involvement poses a question. Jayant is the radical centre of her life, and the question she is confronted with is fundamental to her existence, her wholeness, "But what of my love for Jayant, that had been a restricting bond, tormenting me" (186). She hopes and despairs at the same
time. She tries to come to terms with her own complex ambiguous nature in the context of her love for Jayant, and her marriage with him, "May be Jayant would understand. May be Jayant wouldn’t" and resolves "But even so..." (1983: 187). The resolution is helped by her love for Naren, and his legacy of 'simplicity of will.' Naren's legacy makes her understand the need to know her "wants"—"How can I live without knowing what I want?" She asks herself, "I must know to live without fear... fear of being unloved, misjudged, misunderstood, displeasing. Without fear of failure" (174). And Indu returns to freedom within the 'magic circle' she had drawn round Jayant and herself, she returns 'home,' the one she lived in with Jayant: "That was my only home.... I would put all this behind me and go back to Jayant" (186). Indu returns equipped with that 'quality of courage' necessary to face the challenge of identity crisis that her marriage with Jayant had always posed—returns to suffer, to question and to find her roots.

As a child-girl she was always told to be obedient, submissive and unquestioning. She used to laugh and always though that she would never try to show what she was not. But marriage changes everybody. To her great shock and surprise, she found that Jayant had not only expected her to submit but had taken her submission for granted and she also, without being aware of it, submitted herself to him step by step in the name of love. When the realization came to her, she found it was not love but an adjustment as she never wanted conflict in her married life. As it was a love-marriage, she did not want to give any chance to her parents to blame her for the step taken by her. She wanted to prove her success. We see her pathetic state,
The hideous ghost of my own cowardice confronted me as I thought of this... that I had clung tenaciously to Jayant, to my marriage, not for love alone, but because I was afraid of failure. I had to show them that my marriage, that I was a success.... And so I went on lying, even to myself (1983: 159).

Here, the writer has very rightly and minutely put forth the situation in which young modern women, who are sandwiched between tradition and modernity, leave behind the conventions and take the initiative to join modernity, are entangled.

According to Indu, one should listen to the dictates of one's own conscience and be true to oneself in speech as well as action. As O.P. Bhatnagar says, "In the end, comes the realization that freedom lies in having the courage to do what one believes is the right thing to do and the determination and the tenacity to adhere to it. That alone can bring harmony in life" (Unpublished paper, 1991: 118-129). But, unfortunately, she herself has failed to do so either for fear of failure or because of timidity. The very fact makes her see herself as a sinner and deceiver and becomes a cause of her sufferings.

Another ambition or ideal dream for Indu is to attain the state of "detachment" and "loneliness" (1983: 108), and be perfect in herself. To achieve this she had made Naren her reference group. She always wanted to be like Naren – completely detached and non-involved. However, she wonders if she would ever reach the stage of no passions and ambitions and being satisfied. To her surprise, she finds herself involved and attached in many ways. She expects others to show concern for her, e.g., she wishes that her parents invite them (Indu and Jayant) formally to their place though her father does not find it necessary to give a formal invitation. In
the same way, she expects too much from Jayant which results in frustration,

I am grading expectations down. Each month, each day, I expect less and less and less from... why can't I compromise for what he can give... deep affection, yes; total absolute commitment (1983: 130).

On one occasion, her father talks of having met Jayant. She asks him how he was and the answer is, "wonderful, wonderful, wonderful" (92). At this she just burns in anger as what she expected to hear was that Jayant was pining for love. Similarly, when Naren says that he is going back to his work, the word 'going' disturbs her and she feels like a "deserted, abandoned child" (146). She feels very much attached to Naren as she thinks that it is only Naren who has achieved the state of detachment. Indu longs to be detached and independent but to no avail. She feels ashamed of herself when she does not see the things in a practical form. She tells Naren,

I am still, and dead. And now when you tried to kiss me. I thought... this is Jayant. So that's all I'm, Naren, Not a pure woman. Not a too faithful wife. But an anachronism. A woman who loves her husband too much. Too passionately. And is ashamed of it (83).

On the one hand, she is ashamed of her not being a pure woman, but on the other hand, she hates her womanhood. She stops working for the woman magazine, "Women, women, women.... I got sick of it. There was nothing else. It was a kind of narcissism. And as if we had locked ourselves in a cage and thrown away the key" (78). In fact, she started hating and fighting against the womanhood since the day she was made aware of her
being a woman by the elder women in the family. The thrusting-upon attitude by the society in general and the family members in particular has made her more rebellious and aggressive. She looks at each situation from the same angle. Even at the idea of love which she herself initiates, she starts doubting,

I had for some time loved Jayant. But between the idea and the reality there is an immeasurable distance. To see, to feel a real man was so far removed from the idea of love as it was to me then... a small crack in the perfection (1983: 83).

Indu struggles hard to understand the life in reality, the actual cause which is destroying her married life. She feels that her sense of certainty, confidence and assurance is being destroyed in the presence of Jayant. And when she talks of such feelings to him, he would call it only 'nonsense' and nothing else. This becomes the crux of the problem. Jayant never bothers to understand what she really wanted, what her feelings are. To be precise, we can say that there is no real communication between them. She toys with the idea of leaving Jayant when she sees that there is no real understanding between them,

love, that's a word I don't really understand. It seems to me an overworked word.... I love a book, word, sari... etc., what I feel for Jayant... can I compress all of it within this word... sometimes I wonder if I will leave him.... The only way in which I can be, myself, my whole self again (88).

But then, again her questioning mind questions as to why she is in a confused state of mind. This is the main trouble with Indu. She is willing to wound but afraid to strike. As a result of this, instead of leaving Jayant, she
goes back to him with the vain hope that the things will change. Her mind unrolls thus,

    go back to Jayant. What kind of a life can you build on a foundation of dishonesty.... Now I would go back and see that home could stand the scorching touch of honesty. Nevertheless I knew I would not tell Jayant about Naren and me (1983: 187).

One can see her failure as her new efforts are also rooted in dishonesty. Indu's mind is torn between two extremes. On the one hand, she is so attached to her parental house that the house and the voice, the sounds, the smells and the members of the house have become a part and parcel of her life; and on the other hand the house turns out to be a "caged place," "a trap" and the family "a large amorphous group of people with conflicting interests" (61). She is always in a confused state of mind and struggling with the situations to reach a final solution.

Indu is not only an educated young woman, she is highly sensitive too. She starts aspiring to become independent and complete in her self. But then she finds dominant Akka and even the family to be a hindrance in achieving her goal of attaining independence and completeness. Akka doesn't allow her to meet the boy in the lone corner of the library and speaks ill of her mother. Indu leaves the house and later marries Jayant, a man of her own choice. Thus she leaves one house and enters another to have independence, completeness and joy. But soon she realizes the futility of her search. In her own words, "Jayant and I... I wish I could say we have achieved complete happiness. But I cannot fantasize" (14). As for achieving completeness in herself, but idea of completion remains a dream to her, "That I can never be complete in myself" (31).
Indu ultimately realizes 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 a mere shadow to her. Naren has no permanent place in her memory. Hence she decides to go back to Jayant who she feels is totally innocent. It is she who is to blame for the marital discord in their lives. She has created a hell out of a heaven. She, the narcissist who “had locked herself in a cage and thrown away the key” (1983: 78), forgotten the roots, feeding on only dreams and shadows. She has failed in love not Jayant. She has escaped from the familial responsibilities of the home. She realizes that marriage had stunted and hampered her individuality for she saw it as a ‘trap’ and not a bond and that the home where the family is housed, she saw it as a ‘cage’. Now she realizes that all those were mere illusions and not reality and all the struggles of her life was an act of futility,

But what of my love for Jayant, that had been a restricting bond, tormenting me, which I had so futilely struggled against? Restricting bond? Was it not I who made it so? Torment? Had I not created my own torment? Perhaps it was true.... There was only one thing I wanted now... and that was to go home... the one I lived with Jayant. That was my only home.... I would put all this behind me and go back to Jayant.... I knew I would not tell Jayant about Naren and me... That had nothing to do with the two of us and our life together. But there were other things I had to tell him. That I was resigning from my job. That I would do the kind of writing I had always dreamt of doing (186-187).

Thus Indu’s uncompromising and paradoxical feminine self that frantically longed for self-expression for the articulation of her feminine voice, 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. Thus O.P. Bhatnagar says,

in the end, comes the realization that freedom lies in having the courage to do what one believes is the right thing to do and the determination and the tenacity to adhere to it. That alone can bring harmony in life (1991: 118-129).

The meek, docile and humble Indu finally emerges as a bold, challenging, conscious and rebellious woman. She resigns her job, thus defying the male authority, hierarchy and the irony of a woman's masked existence. Her self-discovery is the frightening visions of the feminine self's struggle for harmony and sanity. She comes out of her emotional upheaval, to lead a meaningful life with her husband Jayant. Her 'home-coming' is ironical since the home she had discarded becomes the place of refuge, or solace and consolation. It is Akka's house which makes her realize many things and offers ample opportunities to know herself, her inner life. It is here that she is able to discover her roots - an independent woman and a writer and what the shadows are - a daughter, a mother and a commercial writer. She begins to see life in a new light. Have a fresh look at Akka's house. "Yes, the house had been a trap too, binding me to a past I had to move away from. Now, I felt clean, as if I had cut away all the unnecessary, uneven edges off myself" (1983: 186). Indu now, feels a sense of hope for life, for existence. She negates the ideas of non-existence. She says,

No, there is no such thing. To accept it will be to deny the miracle of life itself. If not this stump, there is another. If not this tree, there will be others. Other trees will grow, other flowers will bloom, other fragrances will pervade. Other airs...
felt as if I was watching life itself... endless, limitless, formless and full of grace (1983: 184).

Marriage to Indu is a "cold-blooded bargaining to meet, mate and reproduce" (03). That's all. The tragedy of her marriage is that it fails to assure her the promised happiness. It mutilates her; it dooms her to repetition and routine, the monotony of 'meet, mate and reproduce'. Almost always it annihilates her. But a woman is not to blame for it.

It is the masculine code, it is the society developed by the males and in their interest, that has established the woman's situation in a form that is at present a source of torment for both the sexes (De Beauvoir, 1974: 500).

Indu's liberation is a biological-revolution. She detests the idea of woman as a 'rearing machine', a caretaker of the child. In playing such a role she yields herself, though reluctantly, before patriarchy — "the systematic subordination of women" (Firestone, 1970: 01). She seems to question herself as to why women take care of the offspring should. Why not men? Perhaps she wants to eliminate this division of labour based upon sex — the sexual caste system. But in thinking so, she puts on the garb of an abnormal girl ('masculine girl') who does not want to be a mother and hence lose her self-worth, her feminists. Since "women are socially and culturally conditioned to be mothers" (Oakley; 1974: 187). She should have gladly accepted the role of rearing a child like that of an ideal mother. But she does not, thereby alienating herself from her feminist.

All mothers need children not to abandon her (the child) to her fate but to nurse her. Unless a woman's 'maternal instinct' is satisfied, she will
become increasingly frustrated and forlorn. Indu should accept the role of an ideal mother, if she at all has a 'maternal instinct' and should not renounce, in the name of 'liberation', all that female biology has to offer. Perhaps, Indu wants to assert herself and hence believes that since motherhood is a patriarchal institution, each woman has to deny herself, even temporarily, the experience of mothering, so that the patriarchal institution is destroyed once and for all. Such is Indu's feminist vision which "has recoiled from female biology" (Rich, 1974: 31). But as women struggle to elude patriarchal oppression in order to assert their feminist, they gradually become alienated from the socio-familial milieu for "feminity is itself alienating" (Foreman, 1977: 151).

The greatest crime for Indu is that she is born a girl. She feels that womanhood is a curse: "I had committed a great crime by being born a girl" (1983: 126). Being a female Indu "could neither assert, nor demand or proclaim" (132). She doesn't fit into the world" (102). Then where does she belong? She doesn't know. Where do I belong?. It is this search for roots that moves her to affirm her identity through the assertion of her feminine self, "...assert yourself. Don't suppress it. Let it grow and flourish, never mind how many things it destroys in the bargain" (132).

Like Sarita, Indu is the 'new' Indian woman – modern, economically-independent and married to a man of her choice. Though she considers herself to be a liberated woman, she too is unassertive. Without realizing it, her relationship with her husband has deteriorated into the same kind of empty traditional relationship between husbands and wives (generally seen in arranged marriages) that she has always despised.
In her marriage with Jayant, she has compromised on several issues, seemingly in the belief that she was making adjustments out of love for him. She has modelled her lifestyle and her values to suit him, though he has never directly asked her to do so. She has even compromised her writing, substituting honesty with sycophantic dishonesty, just because Jayant had thought that was the order of the day. She knows that (She and Jayant) are on different levels.... He chooses his level. And I try to choose the one he would like me to be on. Though she is assailed by doubt, Indu allows herself to passively enter into a relationship of submissive wife and dominating husband, deceiving herself into thinking that that is what she wants. It is obvious that she has internalized the patriarchal notion that a man is superior to a woman and that she is defined in his terms. Their sexual relationship is a source of tension between Indu and Jayant because she is passionate and the initiator in their sexual relationship and he finds her ardour shocking. Unable to discern that by rejecting Indu's passion, Jayant is trying to force his patriarchal values on her.

Deshpande has observed that Indu's situation is a comment on how "Indian women are forced by a bigoted society to repress their sexuality" (Demythifying Womanhood, 1995: 08). As she begins to suppress her real feelings 'bits of garbage', she begins to experience a corresponding loss of self-esteem. Summons from her grand aunt, Akka, who is on her death-bed, give Indu the opportunity to leave her home and introspect upon her situation. During her stay at the old house, she discovers that her inability to assert herself has been the major cause of the dissatisfaction that she is experiencing in marriage. She feels marginalized and oppressed, but as she is unable to see any overt signs of oppression, she does not know the reason for her discontent.
On reaching the old house, Indu meets Akka briefly. Akka who dies during the night leaving all her wealth to Indu, Other relatives too stake their claim upon the money, leaving Indu in a dilemma regarding the situation distribution of the money. At that moment of confusion and indecision, she journeys into her past to understand and analyse the present and its problems. This also leads to her reflecting upon her own relationship with Jayant.

Deshpande unfolds Indu's character and her conflict through comparison and contrast with the other women characters in the novel. One of the most important among these is Mini whose marriage has been arranged by her parents. Although she is not actually married off in the novel, there are several indications as to the kind of man she is about to marry. The groom is neither highly educated nor good-looking. However, marriage with him does offer the prospect of security and a certain social status to Mini. Deshpande reveals the pragmatic aspects of arranged marriages by contrasting Mini with Indu who has both choice and freedom to shape her own life and who has also had higher education and is economically-independent. Mini who has none of these advantages, has little option but to acquiesce to the marriage, keeping in view the positive points of such an alliance. Within the social limits imposed on her, Mini emerges as a strong woman who knows what she wants and who is not swayed by sentiment. Indu, in comparison, appears confused and uncertain.

Indu's contempt for arranged marriages and for the conventional relationship shared by her Kaka and Kaki exposes the extent of her internalization of certain stereotypical ideas. She is a 'modern' woman for whom it is fashionable to disparage all traditional relationships. Indu
wonders if women like her Kaki who are devoted to their husbands are “martyrs, heroines, or just stupid fools?” (1983: 67). Yet, can only these three categories be applied to women who have been conditioned not to see themselves as distinct from their husband? Traditionally, this is expressed in the concept of 'ardhangini'. Deshpande, throughout the novel, alerts the reader to the possibility of misjudgment on Indu's part towards these women who do not have any alternative but to enter traditionally arranged marriages. On the other hand, there are women like Indu herself who have the choice, but who surrender their freedom because of an inability to assert themselves. In spite of possessing the advantage of an educated person's understanding and exposure, Indu fails to grasp that in any relationship it is also our own responsibility to ask to be treated with dignity.

In the end, Indu realizes that she has deceived herself and lived with the illusion that she has led a better life than the other women in her family. She has always regarded their lives as restrictive and limited while in reality it is her own life that has become so. The women around her seem happy with what they have, while she has aspired for more and not known how to achieve it, having rejected the traditional way and having lacked the assertive personality of the free woman. She also recognizes that responsibility is a pertinent component of the traditional way of life whereas she has always shunned it. She has been resentful of Akka's legacy to her because it has meant responsibility. But gradually she comes to understand that interdependence is the hallmark of family life in Indian society,
A family... is like any other group. There are the strong members and the weak... And Akka though I was one of the strong ones. That is why she put the burden on me (1983: 159).

Indus first act after this realization is to finance Mini's wedding with Akka's money, an act that suggests her self-assertion and her growing acknowledgement of the value of the traditional way. There is also a grudging recognition that a woman can be as unhappy in a traditional marriage as in a marriage of her own choice if she fails to assert herself.

Indu's affair with Naren becomes a metaphor for Indu's rebellion against Jayant's humiliation of her for being the initiator in their sexual relationship. The affair acts as a catharsis and frees her of self-imposed limits. Having purged herself of the feelings of guilt and shame towards Jayant, she decides that she will no longer try to deceive him nor to hide her true self from him in order to make herself more acceptable and lovable to him. Through this resolution, she learns to liberate herself and rid herself of her complexes. She resolves to speak out, to stand up for herself.

What kind of a life can you build on a foundation of dishonesty? What kind of a home have I built? Now I would go back and see if that home can stand the scorching touch of honesty (186-187).

Honesty requires one has to courage to stand up for oneself, one's values, needs, to posses the ability to assert. She had passively accepted Jayant's values, his life-style and ideas, without pausing to consider what her own were. Without realizing it, she had been playing the submissive, traditional Indian wife. Her stay at the old house becomes that powerful, soul-searching event which results in her making the feminist decision of
henceforth speaking out in the face of all oppression overt or covert. In the
dictatorial world of orthodox society woman has only two ways one is to
submit her and another to rebel. Sometimes she is submissive like the cow
and donkey. But unfortunately Indian woman has no courage to put her
voice against the exploiters. Therefore she has only one way to rebel against
the society through the weapon of silence. This is her different way of
opposition by the Gandhian way. And this silence wins over the ill
treatment offered by society and social institution.
WORKS CITED


