FILIAL RELATIONSHIP

Nature made babies as cute as they are so that we never realize what an exhausting and thankless job parenting is. By the time we know the truth, it is too late. (CD: 18),

Sindhu writes to her niece, Devayani Mudhol, about the experience of joy she had after the birth of her grandchild, Ria, in Shashi Deshpande’s 10th novel, *The Country of Deceit* (2008). Even in her early novels, she has shown the intricacies of parent-child relationship, particularly in the context of urban middle class background, and told Gita Vishwanathan, in an interview on June 3, 2003 that parent child relationship “is a very deep and complex relationship.” (2005:229) But before we touch upon the presentation of filial relationship in Deshpande’s novels, it would be prudent to discuss, in brief, the concept of filial relationship in modern Indian context.

The term ‘filial’ (Adj.) means “of due from son or daughter” (OD:6th,1974) or “the way children behave towards their parents.” (OALD:7th,2007) It is derived from the Latin word *filius* meaning a ‘son/daughter.’ (Ibid) It begins with birth and ends with death: one enters the world as a child - a son or a daughter - and exits it as a parent- a father or a mother. It is the very first relationship that human beings forge in this world. It is a blood tie and the very bedrock of all other relationships forged at different stages in life and it plays a very important role in moulding and shaping other human relationships. According to Jasbir Jain, one’s life is shaped by one’s childhood and one’s parents. To quote her:

Childhood experiences and memories go a long way towards moulding life attitude and personal relationships. A feeling of rejection, a traumatic memory, tension in the household, sexual discrimination, extra-marital interest on the part of a parent - all these influence future relationships. (2003:121)

Filial relationship is very important in India where children consider their parents sacred and have special regards for them. They seek their parent’s blessings by touching their feet before embarking upon any new
venture in life - Shravan Kumar and Lord Rama are the legendary characters cited as examples of devoted sons to their parents. Parents, on the other hand, see their children as support in their old age. As India does not provide homes for senior citizens, old age pension or social benefits as is in the Western countries, parents are wholly dependent on their children who consider it their sacred duty to look after their old and infirm parents and it is disgraceful if they are unable to do so. Therefore, caring and affectionate parents and obedient and devoted children make an ideal filial relationship in the Indian context.

As parents and children belong to different generation, the generation gap - the difference between ‘then’ and ‘now’- plays an important role in filial relationship. Parents are often labelled ‘traditional’- those who prefer to be authoritative and dominating and judgmental and responsible showing concern for social customs, family tradition and economic security, while the children are often labelled ‘rebels’- those who prefer to keep authority, observe transparency, take risk, exercise autonomy and remain open minded. Such attitudes and mind set reflecting generation gap often disturb the harmony in filial relationship. Parents often tell their irritated children, “You will never know until you become a father/mother.” In fact, having children changes one’s equation with one’s parents as is the common saying: “without being a mother one is just half a mother; without being a father one is just half a father.” There is an interplay of ‘patience’ and ‘impatience’ between parents and children - the children lose patience and get irritated but parents are never tired of being parents, even if they become grandparents. The generation gap in modern post-globalized India is wider than ever and filial relationship is heading towards south.

Like ‘generation gap’ gender also plays a significant role in filial relationship in the Indian context. Father and mother, son and daughter do not have equal status. As parents, mother is in the centre and father is at the periphery. The life of children revolves round their mother. She is revered like a goddess-an immortal source of love, affection, sacrifice, learning, values and everything. She is often torn between the tender world of children and the complex and coarse world of an adult. Father remains a symbol of authority conveniently detached and intervenes to keep order and discipline. But as children sons are in the centre and daughters are kept at the periphery. Parents’ life revolves round their sons and they are considered life-long assets while daughters are married off and forgotten. In the classical Indian myths there are
very few stories about mothers of daughters whereas the stories of mothers of worthy sons have reigned. The mother of a son is considered to be a worthy woman.

However, the filial relationship in modern post-liberalized India is quite different from old and traditional one. Modern parents look upon their children as an opportunity-a project, a mission, rather than as responsibility. They want to grow and groom their children for coveted positions like IAS, IPS, doctor, engineers, professors, etc. They emerge as both the cushion and a launch pad for today’s children. Children, now a days, on the other hand, acknowledge the multiple roles of parents as organizer, guide, enforcer and friend in their life but they also seek freedom and assertion of personality and want their parents to worry a little less and not take unnecessary tension. They try to overcome their mother/father fixation.

Besides, gender discrimination among parents and children is getting thinner and thinner with fathers’ significantly increasing role in parenting and daughters getting almost equal opportunity and empowerment, thanks to overwhelming number of educated and working women which has transformed the traditional patriarchal society. But the impact of social, cultural and economic liberalization and globalization is widening the generation gap adversely affecting the harmonious filial relationship. For Shashi Deshpande, the parent-child relationship and their complex aspects is a vital issue of concern as she mentions in her revealing interview to Gita Vishwanathan in 2003: “But marriage is important for me and so is the family, not just marriage. But besides marriage, the parent-child relationship is also important. These are the two relationships one is generally concerned with.”(2005:224)

Broadly speaking, there are four aspects of Filial relationship: (1) Mother-Daughter (2) Mother-Son (3) Father-Daughter and (4) Father-Son relationships. Shashi Deshpande’s novels project at different levels all the four aspects of filial relationship but her focus is primarily on mother-daughter relationship which she portrays as a problematic one. Explaining this phenomenon, she says:

That is how life is. If I had to portray a father-son relationship, I would give you a huge problem. I have never yet seen a father-son relationship comfortable and happy. A father-daughter one is happier,
a mother-son is easier and this is how things are. It’s not me, it’s life. That’s the way it is and that’s the way I’ve seen life. (2005:230)

Shashi Deshpande’s novels, being woman-centric have female protagonists who rebel against their mothers. According to Medha Sachdev, “Deshpande’s novels do not valourize motherhood. In fact, the bond between mother and daughter is perpetually under question.”(2011:182) She has thus deconstructed the classical Indian myths which valourize mother-son relationship. She has also deconstructed the Indian myth of a loving mother, a person with an unlimited capacity for sacrifice and forgiveness as mothers in her novels are jealous, selfish and possessive, even cruel. According to Shalmalee Palekar:

The conflict between mother and daughter is presented by author as a conflict between tradition and modernity, a clash between freedom and dependence, of the assertion of selfhood and the need for love in relationships. (2005:60)

Most of the protagonists in her novels reject their mothers as models because they represent a patriarchal outlook on life. Besides, these protagonists are extremely critical of other women around them. Vrinda Nabar (1995) and Ashish Nandi (1990) raise the question as to why conservative Indian women are so manifestly hostile to one another especially in relationships where, through mutual bonding, they could achieve so much. Perhaps patriarchy often operates through mothers and other women and women themselves become the cause and instrument of female subjugation and suffering. In fact, traditional mothers in Deshpande’s novels have ‘a frog in a well’ attitude. Confined to their homes and burdened with daily chores, they fail to grow and develop with time and most likely they end up, according to Nabar and Nandi,

surrendering to the traditional clap-trap about mother as goddess...This self–deception perpetuates the power equations whereby the woman/mother eventually sees her imprisonment as empowering her by conferring on her the attributes of mother and wife. She sees these largely in relation to the men in the domestic power-hierarchy (husbands/sons). (1995:185)

In the traditional Indian pattern of child rearing, the mother-daughter relationship has its own dynamic as, for the mother, the daughter is
placed a distant third only after her son and her husband and hence she naturally feels somewhat alienated. Besides, the mother, being the symbol of status quo fails to serve as a model for her daughter. Consequently the daughter fails to identify herself with her mother and struggles to seek her own identity, an anti-mother identity because she is afraid of becoming like her mother.

Shashi Deshpande does not seem to subscribe to Germaine Greer’s view that motherhood makes one vulnerable; rather she believes that parenthood makes one vulnerable. Thus she tries to make parenthood gender-neutral and see the vast area of a common ground between fathers and mothers. She seems to subscribe to Sudhir Kakkar’s view expressed in his *The Inner World* that ‘good mother’ picture is a male construct; that women are much less sentimental about mothers; and that they have a more realistic idea of the relationship. Therefore, she has a firm conviction that only a woman writer can portray the real picture of a mother. Obviously, women portrayed in Deshpande’s novels are not mythical mothers—not so loving, sacrificing and forgiving—and she often faces such questions: “Why are the mothers in your novels so unloving?” (2003:96) She explains in “Telling Our Own Stories”:

Actually, as far as women are concerned, the mother myth, an immensely popular one, is a huge burden. We’ve brought to this relationship a huge baggage of concepts and ideas which are difficult to ignore, we have made it almost impossible for us to get past the image of ever forgiving, the always sacrificing mother. When I became a mother, I found such a discrepancy between what I was told about how mothers felt, and what I really felt, that I was deeply disturbed. It was only as a writer that I could get across this disturbing split and approach reality. And I realized that motherhood does not turn you overnight into a different person, it does not make you a nobler, stronger, more loving and lovable individual. You are the same person, except for the enormous bond that suddenly appears between you and the new born. In fact, we know that mothers can be selfish, jealous, possessive, that they can even at times be cruel. Nevertheless, we cling to our mythical idea of motherhood, when the truth is that there is enough excitement and wonder in motherhood which we can discover on our own. (2005:97)

Deshpande’s first novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* deals with complicated filial relationship between Saru and her parents, particularly
her mother. Saru’s brother, Dhruv, holds an important position in this filial relationship but he remains only a third person in this novel as he had died at the age of seven. The root cause of complication in filial relationships is parents’ preference, particularly mother’s preference and undue favour for the son and their negligence and indifference shown to the daughter. According to Sarbjit K. Sandhu:

The novel reveals the life of Sarita who is always neglected and ignored in favour of her brother. She is not given any importance; no parental love is showered upon her even on her birthdays. Her brother’s birthdays, however, are celebrated with full enthusiasm including the performance of the religious rituals. When her brother is drowned, she is blamed for it. (1991:19)

The mother who is a traditional and orthodox woman is attached to her son, Dhruva. Saru is always measured against Dhruva and is seen as lesser. She feels like an unwanted child. She remembers how Dhruva’s naming ceremony was held with a joyous excitement; how his birthdays were celebrated with fervour. She resented this gender discrimination. She felt unloved and unsecure. She develops a deep rooted sense of fear and rejection. When Dhruva dies, her mother held her responsible for his death: “You killed your brother ...Why didn’t you die? Why are you alive and Dhruva dead?” (34-35) She developed guilt consciousness. She ceases to exist as a daughter of the house to be loved. According to Anna Kurian:

The mother’s perception of Sarita as Dhruva’s killer effectively ends any identity the former may have had as the daughter of the house. (2006:291) She is now on a perpetual war with her mother who could never forgive her for being alive when her brother was dead.

As Saru grows up, her mother starts imposing restrictions on her without understanding that the new generation is passing through a transitional period where the daughter is sandwiched between tradition and modernity. She always reminds her: “You should be careful now about how you behave. Don’t come out in your petticoat like that. Not even when it’s only your father who’s around.” (55) No one other than her mother is to comb her hair. She cannot spend time on her own, or with her friends. She denies her all rights over her ‘self’ and wants her to be fully dependent on her. When she goes for a walk with her friends on her birthday, she is greeted with: “Can’t you talk?
Am I so much below your notice?...What am I? An enemy?”(170) Saru uses the weapon of silence to face her mother’s attack. She withholds speech and refuses to speak to her mother on occasions: “I kept silent and that enraged her even more.”(170) Her mother notices: “...You can talk to your friends for hours but you can’t speak a sentence to your mother.”(170) Saru gets fed up of all these. She starts hating all that her mother stands for to such an extent that she almost rejects herself as a woman. In a bid to shock, she once declares to her that “if you’re a woman, I don’t want to be one.”(62) Jasbir Jain sees this hostility between the mother and the daughter as “ a conflict between claims and roles-Saru’s desire not to be confined within a gender role, her need to be loved like a sibling and to be able to communicate with others.”(2003:49) According to Adesh Pal, “Saru starts hating her mother, her values and traditions. Her hatred and apathy for the natural biological functions of the female body is an extension of her hatred for her mother.”(2001:100-101)

But Saru feels abhorrent but helpless when her periods begin: “A kind of shame engulfed me, making me want to rage, to scream against the fact that put me in the same class as my mother.”(62) She resents the exclusion imposed upon her during menstruation. She was not allowed to enter the kitchen or the puja room, she was made to sleep on a straw mat and use a separate cup and plate. She was not allowed to touch anything for the fear of pollution. All these practices fill her with anger and resentment. She tries to get even with her mother by denying her all authority in their relationship. When her mother rejects her plea for her admission to a medical college on the ground that they cannot afford to both educate her and marry her off, Saru ignores her and addresses all her arguments and statements to her father. When her mother intervenes, she does not even listen to her: “I’m not talking to you. I’m not asking you for anything. I know what your answer will be. No, forever ‘no’... You don’t want me to have anything. You don’t even want me to live.”(128) According to Jasbir Jain: “Saru’s whole life goes off the rails primarily because her mother had tried too hard to mould her into a woman’s role.”(2003:57)

Saru, being a modern girl with a sense of reasoning and non-conformist attitude towards patriarchal set up, cannot tolerate her mother’s constant discrimination, accusation and insinuation and revolts against her parents. This revolt shapes her future course of action as she does things to cause pain to her mother and to seek love and security. Her mother always wants to control her and take decisions for her education and marriage. But she
takes her own decisions and leaves her parental home first by taking admission in a medical college at Bombay and then by marrying a man of her choice against the will of her mother. In the medical college, she enjoys her life free from her mother’s control. She says, “The hostel life is a kind of “rebirth” into a totally different world where you don’t have to stay outside for “those three days”, you are no longer an “untouchable”; you can even talk about it, “Oh, damn, I must change again. It’s like a tap, that’s what it is.”(87) Her marriage with Manohar, which was a radical departure from parental expectations and social orthodoxy, was her final attempt to get away from her mother and her home. She recollects, “I had come away from my parents in a fever of excitement after the last battle. The die was cast, the decision taken, my boat burnt. There could be no turning back” (31-32)Rich Adrienne assigns this bitterness in mother-daughter relationship to a phenomenon which he calls “Matrophobia” in *Of Woman Born* (1976) and explains it in the following words:

Matrophobia as the poet Lynin Sukenik has termed, it is the fear not of one’s mother or of motherhood but of becoming one’s mother......But where a mother is hated to the point of matrophobia, there may be a deep underlying pull towards her ....An adolescent daughter may live at war with her mother yet borrow her clothes, her perfumes. (1976:235)

It is interesting to note that as Sarita grows older, she begins to identify with her mother and, indeed, during her stay in her natal home after leaving Manu, She even begins to wear her mother’s sarees. But according to Sarbjit K.Sandhu, it is the product of woman education in the modern society. Saru represents modern middle class women who suffer the trauma owing to a bitter conflict between the imposed and the willed. They are brought up in a traditional atmosphere but the education they receive make them non-conformist. They respond to real life situations according to their choice and not compulsion. They not only change themselves but also try to change others - their mothers, sisters, cousins, nieces, friends, etc. In this context, Sarbjit K. Sandhu makes an important observation about Saru:

She develops hatred towards her mother who always comes in the way of her progress. The writer has shown a gap in the mother-daughter relationship. In other words, it is a conflict between the old and the young: the traditional and the modern. The position of woman
that is underscored by the author, appears to be a blend of acceptance and rejection; flexibility and rigidity; fantasy and reality; and above all revolt and compromise...She is brought up in a traditional atmosphere, but the education she receives makes her a changed person with a rebellious attitude towards tradition. As an educated young woman she does not accept anything without reason. (1991:25)

Education has invoked in Saru a consciousness which was not present in the older generation. All the time she is brooding over her fate, questioning herself what she really is and she ultimately wants to become. As her mother puts all restrictions on her without considering the changed circumstances and the generation gap widened considerably during the transitional period, Saru resents her, defies her and hates her. Maria Mies makes an illuminating remark in this context:

....the non-conformity conduct of the women is not the consequence of an external necessity but of changed consciousness. They are not satisfied with the rhetoric of equality between man and woman but want to see that the right to an individual life and the right to development of their individual capabilities are realized in their own lives. (1985:106)

This mother-daughter relationship breaks down after Saru’s marriage with Manohar because of the unyielding and unforgiving attitude of the mother to her rebellious daughter. According to Anna Kurian, “...when Sarita decides to marry Manohar, a non-Brahmin, the mother-daughter relationship breaks completely: Sarita no longer exists for her mother. Even on her death bed the mother is able to say ,”What daughter? I have no daughter.”(109) and logically this is what ought to follow her statement at Sarita’s marriage: “Daughter? I don’t have any daughter. I had a son and he died. Now I am childless.”(196)For her mother, Sarita’s identity after her marriage to Manohar, is that of a contaminant, and this is intensified by the resentment she harbours over the fact that Sarita lived while Dhruva, the son who would have ensured the continuation of the family line, died an untimely death.”(2006:291)When she falls ill, she hates to go to the doctor for the simple reason that her daughter belongs to the same category. Saru regrets the rituals that she had missed during her pregnancies. Her mother never came for the ceremony when the pregnant woman is made to sit and is offered sweets and clothes: “Suddenly at the sight of the two, the mother of the daughter, she had
tears in her eyes. I never had this. So many depravations, she wondered now...Why had that one hurt so much?" (57) Her mother had been ill with cancer for more than a couple of years. During this period she could have summoned her daughter, forgiven her and claimed her as her own. But she did none of these. She even forbid her husband from informing Saru. Saru loses all contact with her natal family till her mother’s death. When a patient on her clinic informs her about her mother’s death, Saru’s response is: “What was wrong with her?” She reacts as a doctor, not as a daughter. She hates her mother even when she is dead: “I hate her, sapping me of happiness, of everything. She’s always done it to me...taken happiness away from me. She does it even now when she’s dead.” (100) But she can no longer violate her dead mother.

Saru returns to her parental home after 15 years and just after the death of her mother for solace. She not only wants to escape from her traumatic conjugal life but also wants to reach out to her grieving father. According to Jasbin Jain, Saru’s home coming is very important from many aspects in respect of filial relationship. There is need to belong, to pay homage to her dead mother, to reach out to her living father. And in this there is a desire to build relationships in order to forget the fears of the past. Also it is an act of choice. When she comes home, an adult woman, she has not merely to bridge the differences, but also to claim her rightful place within her parental home. To quote her: “Finally, Saru has to return to her parental home to come to terms with life, to let go the ghost of the past, to get rid of the terrors that inhabit her sleeping and waking hours.” (2003:210)

But Saru finds herself an unwelcome guest there. Her father looks like an unwilling host and sounds strange while talking. She expects care and sympathy from her father but he remains indifferent and disinterested. She thinks that all these may be because she had a love marriage defying her parents. She wonders: “If mine had been an arranged marriage, if I had left it to them to arrange my life, would he had left me like this?” (199) Besides, the father-daughter are not able to interact because of the presence of a third person, Madhav. Her father is not curious; they do not even grieve together, the room which once belonged to her is now occupied by Madhav. She is permanently dislocated.

As Saru stays back in the house, she is able to understand her relationship with her father. She observes that her father accepts her as she is. The man, who she had always considered feeble, is in fact gentle and tolerant.
Her ruminations make her realize that he had always supported her unobtrusively, silently and unconditionally. He had supported her desire for higher studies and sent her to the Medical College. And yet it had seemed to her that his silence accused her as much as her mother’s open hostility. Her hostile mother and her indifferent father had upset the balance in their filial relationship. But the balance is restored in the end of the novel when Madhav is gone home and father and daughter are left alone to sort out the past, to apportion blame, to sit on judgement, to confess and to discuss her marriage. It is for the first time that the father-daughter really learn to talk to or listen to each other. According to Jasbir Jain:

Finally the balance is restored when her father steps into the role of a confidant, when he offers her sympathy, understanding and advice, when he persuades her to replace a sense of self-blame and grievance with investment in the present and when he tells her to comfort her ghosts, not to run away from them. ‘Don’t go without meeting your husband. Talk to him. Tell him what is wrong?’ (2003:217)

Saru finds the right kind of direction after her eventful association with her father. After the death of her mother, interestingly, he appears to be an important force in Saru’s evolution, even though he has always remained in the background, allowing his aggressive wife to take the decisions. He had supported, nevertheless, Saru at crucial moments notwithstanding his limitations as an old fashioned guardian, conservative and reserved with his children. But now her father’s easy and comfortable relationship with Madhav appears strange to her and it gives an indication that his relationship with a son may have been differently shaped. Thus even if Dhruva had survived, Saru may not have fared any better. In fact, he may have pushed her further to the periphery.

Saru’s stay at her natal home also initiates her into a proper understanding of the situations of life and a reconsideration of her relationship with her mother as she falls into the routine of the house, performing the various household chores, meeting the women from the neighbourhood and relieving the tension of her inflated self-image and the determination not to be like her mother. She realizes that she had wronged her mother as she tells her father: “It’s because I wronged her that I’m suffering now. And the more I suffer, the greater the chance, perhaps of my expiating that wrong.”(204). She also realizes that she had never the kind of relationship daughters ordinarily have with their
mothers. And she has passed on some of the same hostility to her own relationship with her daughter, Renuka. She reflects:

Renu, my daughter. She stares at me critically at times, a cold, shrewd objective observer behind those little girl’s eyes of hers. And I become nervous, unsure, uncertain of myself. She does not talk much. She reminds me of a room whose doors are closed. Nothing emerges, neither her joys nor her sorrows. (33)

With such realizations and change of attitude, Saru, who had been running away from her mother, now comes closer to her mother. She begins to tie herself in the way her mother used to do and she increasingly begins to look like her. Even her father comments upon the resemblance. Jasbir Jain sees a transformation in Saru when she says: “Saru falls back into the place of a child in her relationship with her father and adopts attitudes and postures she had been running away from, all her life” and concludes:

*The Dark Holds No Terrors* is about mother-daughter relationships, about incomplete and wrapped families, about relationships that need to be reworked outside the conventional frameworks. Her mother had withdrawn her maternal blessings - instead of clinging to her surviving child, she had spent a lifetime mourning a lost one. Her father ...has none of the male authority that she expects him to have. (2003:50)

Besides learning to free herself of guilt, shame and humiliation, Saru also learns to accept the mystery of human existence. She learns that her life is her own and she is her own refuge. Her parental home and her parents cannot be her refuge. So she decides to leave her parental home and resume her life anew. Premila Paul makes a relevant comment on *The Dark Holds No Terrors* in this context: “The novel does not limit itself to woman’s problem with a woman at the central figure, Shashi Deshpande probes the universally relevant issues of human relationships, man’s tragic aloneness and so on.”(1998:38)

As in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, the mothers in *Come Up and Be Dead* are portrayed in a negative light to make the readers sympathise with the daughters. Mrs. Jyoti Raman has expectations from her daughter, Sonali as she says, “My daughter, she’s on my side, she’ll understand.”(140) But Sonali is really averse to her mother to whom she attributes all her negative
qualities. Her mother does not approve of any sort of man-woman relationship and, in fact, she even discourages her from talking to those girls whom she suspects of having boyfriends. She once interrupts her conversation with Bunny and orders her to come home at once. Sonali is so annoyed that she bursts out: “Amma, why do you shout at me like that? You insult me; you humiliate me before my friends. It’s not fair. I’m ashamed of you; I’m ashamed.”(23) Sonali is so disgusted with her authoritative and suspecting mother’s control over her life that she develops aversion to motherhood. She says in utter disgust: “Mothers! I hope I never become one.”(36) But later on when Mrs. Jyoti Raman is murdered because ‘she knew too much’, Sonali realises that her mother was only trying to protect her from the sordid happenings in the school and outside it.

Another character in the novel, Mridula, does not have a good relationship with her parents. Her father and mother do not know much about their daughter. They are unaware of the happenings in their daughter’s life. Her father says, “Why I didn’t know she was a woman. A female, I mean. She was just my daughter Mridula...I presumed-Why, I thought she was happy.”(169) They did not observe the fact that she was pregnant, troubled and depressed. Mridula is also not close and open to her parents. She enjoys telling lies to her mother, making her feel bad.

Devi, the other female protagonist in the novel, is antagonistic towards her parents. Her mother kept her epileptic fits a secret from her. When she finally comes to know about it when she found her mother in one of her epileptic fits, she could never forget that picture; it still haunted her. She was afraid of being known as the daughter of a mother who gets fits and ashamed of her marriage thinking: “What if your children have it too?”(34) Her aversion to marriage further alienates her from mother. Her attitude towards her father is evident when she compares her father to Kshama’s: “And mine was, poor old man, a failure in life. He never did a thing in his life that could be called an achievement.”(25) Her bitter thoughts about her parents are revealed further when she tells Sona: “Mothers! Dead or alive, they don’t leave you alone. Or maybe, it’s we who can’t leave them alone. And if it isn’t mothers, it is fathers.”(183) However, later she has the painful realization that she was leaving that way not to punish her mother but herself, for being diseased:

I knew that I would always be outside the room of human companionship. It was not my mother’s illness that had kept me out. I had been fooling myself all these years thinking that way. I was the
diseased one, not my mother. It was one of the worst moments of my life. (191)

Kshama, another protagonist in the novel, hated her mother because she loved her son, Pratap, very much. Thus filial relationships presented in Come Up and Be Dead are mostly bitter mother-daughter relationships.

Shashi Deshpande’s Roots and Shadows, presents a surrogate mother—daughter relationship, instead of a normal mother-daughter relationship. Indu, a motherless girl in an orthodox Brahmin joint family headed by Akka, turns to her female relatives in the family for motherly love and care. Akka and Kaki are mother figures for her but she cannot identify with either of them. Akka is her role model but she has grown up rebelling against her restrictive way of ruling the household. According to R.Ramamoorthy: “Indu who had lost her mother at birth identifies, throughout the novel, Akka as the mother figure. She rebels against Akka, her world, her values and marries Jayant against the wishes of Akka.” (1991:117) At one place, Indu describes Akka as “ruthless, bigoted, dominating and inconsiderate.” (24) and at another place as a “malicious, trouble-loving, trouble-creating old woman.” (103) She joined an English medium school and then a co-ed. College in the face of her opposition. She did not allow her to meet the boys and cultivate friendship with them when she was studying in a college. Despite Akka’s restrictions, Indu acquires higher education, takes up a career as a freelance writer, marries Jayant, the man of her choice and leaves home swearing, “I would never go back.” (20) According to P. Ramamoorthy, Akka represents the authority of the mother which Indu rejects to live a life of her own:

Akka, the mother figure in Roots and Shadows, is a domineering woman. She came home as a childless widow and treated almost everyone with her rule of thumb. She is the symbol of authority. Everything that happens in the house is to be approved by her. When she does not approve of an alliance, it is dropped. (1991:117)

Adesh Pal too conforms to Ramamoorthy’s view when he says,

Akka being a “terrible mother” threatened the inflated ego of Indu. Indu’s marriage with Jayant and then her reaction to the male defined
concept of love, marriage and sex are act of resentment or anger. (2001:101)

But Indu’s relationship with Akka undergoes a change when Akka, at her death bed, summons Indu and dies leaving all her wealth to her. Indu who returns to her natal home after 11 years becomes the sole inheritor of Akka’s property and establishes her identity as Akka’s child. She discovers the actual facts of Akka’s painful life-her struggle as a child bride, married to a fully grown, uncaring man double her age and maltreated by a tyrannical mother-in-law. She had become pregnant in her teens and given birth to a dead child. As she remained childless, her husband took a mistress and her miseries increased. Her traumatic married life had come to a close when she exercised her will in not allowing her husband’s concubine to see him at his death bed. She had remained faithful to her old husband and had survived through the relationship as if through a punishment and, in the end, had gained her strength. After her husband’s death she inherited his wealth, returned to her natal home and, despite being a childless widow, she became a prime force in the family, holding all members together because of her wealth and because of the weak, dependent and ineffectual men in the family. Indu wondered at Akka’s strength. She thought that Akka was just an interfering old woman. But she was more than that; She was one of the strongest women. Her strength had come from her convictions. She acted according to her beliefs. This is precisely the quality that Indu herself has lacked in her own marriage. She has not asserted herself in situations where she ought to have. So she decides to emulate Akka’s strength and act according to her own convictions. Her decisions regarding family matters show Indu’s innate strength and determination, very much in the manner of Akka herself. Deshpande thus attempts to synthesize the old and the new symbolized in Akka and Indu respectively. Akka proves to be a major factor in Indu’s evolution and growth. Indu’s cousin, Mini, serves as a foil to Indu, as she has no choice available to her except to get married according to her parents’ wishes.

In Shashi Deshpande’s *That Long Silence*, the mother is again the arch rival in the filial power structure. Jaya, the protagonist, has a stormy relationship with her Ai who, like other traditional Indian mothers, showers her affection upon her son while neglecting her daughter. Jaya resents her mother’s discriminatory treatment and sexist bias. She feels that her mother is a superficial person whose emotions do not run very deep even in her deep
relationship with her husband. She writes disparagingly of “Ai’s laughter, gay and girlish, even after she was made desolate by widowhood.” (45-46)

But Jaya is not fair to her mother when she accuses her not only of domination but also neglecting her duty of preparing Jaya for the duties and chores of a wife and mother. It seems that her attitude towards her mother is subconsciously conditioned by patriarchal expectations of a woman in her mother’s situation. She wished that her mother should live up to the ideal role of the perfect mother. Like Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Indu tries to be as dissimilar from her mother as possible, rejecting her totally as a role model. That is she strives to become a successful wife and mother (which, according to her, Ai was not). Jasbir Jain makes an important observation in this context:

Jaya’s sympathies obviously lie with her father, who was a dreamer like her and who took her for cycle rides. He died “cycling between the two women, Ai and Ajji, up and down the undulating roads, her heart pumping furiously.” (136)

She is critical of her mother, of her lazy, slapdash ways, of her power hunger and her hostility to her mother-in-law and, at later stage, also for not training her in womanly roles. (2003:45-46)

Jaya’s mother had returned to her parental home after her husband’s death and ruled the house as an extension of her mother’s authority. But when the mother dies, the tussle between the daughter of the house (Ai) and the daughter-in-law of the house (Vanitamami) begins. Jaya reflects:

Since Ajji’s death, Vanitamami had changed. She had become aggressive. It was astounding to see all that pent up rage escaping. And Ai seemed unable to cope with the metamorphosed Vanitamami. Her twenty-year domination in her brother’s home was being questioned, and she was losing the battle. (104)

It is surprising that Jaya’s mother totally forgot of her twenty-year old relationship with her husband’s family.

Deshpande’s *The Binding Vine* is built around multiple misunderstandings among women characters, particularly between mothers and daughters, causing misery and unhappiness to several intimately related other women characters in their families and by the time the misunderstandings are cleared, it is too late. The title of the novel suggests that mother and child are
bound by the binding vine of love even though sometimes love takes a heavy toll—after all relationships are developed, maintained and sustained at some cost. The vine is relevant because it grows in all directions, having intricate network, not allowing anything to disengage from its domain. The mother-daughter relationship between Inni, the protagonist, and her mother, Urmila alias Urmi, is expressed through the image of a plant: “Enough to unnerve anyone, not alone a sensitive plant like our poor Inni, to have her child grin at her that way at five in the morning.” (25) Besides these central figures, Jasbir Jain counts several other mother-daughter relationships in this novel which reinforces the idea of the binding vine. To quote her:

There are several mother-daughter relationships in the novel—Inni and Urmi, Urmi and Anu, Akka and Vanna, Vanna and her two daughters, even Mira’ relationship with her mother. There is also the relationship between Priti and her mother, forcing her to blank her out for purposes of her own survival. (41)

Shakutai’s relationship with her two daughters and her younger sister, Sulu (for whom she has a dominantly maternal feeling) is also a part of the narrative and offers a depiction of relationships as they work through different economic levels. Jasbir Jain adds “…And each of the above relationships is not simply a person to person relationship, it is governed by social and cultural patterns and the relationship of the parents.” (2003:56)

Like other heroines of Shashi Deshpande, Urmi too has antagonism towards her mother. Her displeasure with her mother is rooted in her separation from the latter at an early age—early marriage had led to Inni’s early motherhood and, being too young, she was unable to take care of her child properly, so baby Urmi was sent to her parental grandmother at Ranidurg. Inni explains to her the situation in which she could not get mothering:

I was frightened of you, Urmi… I was too young. I was not prepared to have a child. And you were not easy, you used to cry all the time, I didn’t know how to soothe you… Then he (Papa) decided he would take you to his mother. He didn’t say anything to me, he just took you away… I begged him, Urmi, I cried… Nothing could make him change his mind. (199-200)

But Urmi had perceived this action as indicative of her mother’s rejection of her and nursed deep resentment and anger against her.
Though a grown up woman now and a mother herself, Urmi had never asked Inni why she had sent her away and continued to assume it had been her mother’s decision for her own convenience. She remains indifferent to her and Inni had to make up for the loss by being the over caring mother for the rest of her life. Her behaviour towards her mother veers from the unassertive (she is hurt and sulky) to the aggressive (she is angry and self-righteous), but not the assertive (where she can communicate openly and fearlessly with her mother).

The conflict between Urmi and Inni is direct and frontal. Her hostility towards her mother is felt in the angry and harsh language she uses when speaking with her or about her to others. The earliest indication of the conflict between mother and daughter is in Urmi’s disclosure to Vanna that as a child she had preferred the old fashioned dresses made for her by Baiaji, her grandmother, to the expensive ones sent by Inni. She would keep the dresses sent by her mother in the cupboard until she could say truthfully that they were too small for her. The devious manner of repudiating her mother suggests the deep antagonism in Urmi towards her mother. Later when Urmi’s daughter, Anu, dies, she rejects Inni’s solicitousness saying, “When has she ever acted the doting mother with me...?”(25)Like Jaya in That Long Silence, she accuses her mother of not being a perfect mother and house-maker for she had preferred her daughter to manage house for her than the other way round. She could understand and absolve her mother only in the end when her mother’s disclosure dispels the darkness surrounding her. Her misunderstanding vanishes and gives way to clear understanding: “A sense of being vulnerable and sober, as if some armour, I have been wearing all these years against what has been taken on.”(200)She is frightened and stunned at the role of her father and surprised at the resilience of her mother who was denied her right to take a decision with regard to a new born baby.

But the filial relationship between Urmi and her daughter, Anushka alias Anu, is loving. When one year old Anu dies, it brings a great shock to her. She grieves over the death of her daughter which created a unique situation for her. She is unable to express her grief, to cry or to feel for others or to be moved by Vanna’s weeping or Kishore’s tears. She wonders at the silence that has inhabited her. She wonders: “Has Anu taken all my capacity to feel away with her? I begin to bring to bang my head against the wall.”(15)She is not able to forget her. She holds her daughter’s clothes and toys; she feels the child’s body close to her and tells her brother, “There is nothing that doesn’t
remind me of her.”(27) When Inni wants to have a framed photograph of Anu on the wall, she thinks it would amount to putting her among the dead and reacts bitterly: “I don’t need a picture to remember her, I can remember every bit of her, every moment of her life. How can you imagine, I need a picture?”(68) Again when Latika asks her how many kids she has, she replies, “Only one. A son.” But soon she realizes that she had done injustice to Anu by saying so. She reflects: “Only one, a son...the words keep hammering in my mind. How could I, Oh God, how could I? That was betrayal, treachery. How could I deny my Anu?...only one son...how could I?”(106)

Urmi is like an oak and Anu is like a creeper around her. She says, “Once again I can feel the softness of her body in my arms, the heaviness of her head flopping over my shoulder; I can feel her toes, scrabbling at my midriff.”(27) The emotional vine that binds her to her daughter cannot be severed even after the death of her baby. In fact, it becomes stronger and stronger as days go by. Her anguish is not able to find a way out, but she reassures her son, Kartik, that she will not die. The pain of her death motivates her to reach out to other suffering women around her and it enables her to cope with the death of her daughter and to become a self-assured person. It is worthy to note that Urmi’s failure to relate to her mother is duplicated in the next generation by the death of her daughter.

Urmi’s mother-in-law, Mira, holds her mother responsible for her unhappy lot in married life. She was forced into a matrimony when she was a college-going teenager. She dreaded the marriage, resented it and desired her mother’s support in refusing an early marriage, but her mother who was more of a caretaker than the decision maker of her family could do nothing. She merely said, “Nothing is in my hand” and kept silent. Her silence had pushed Mira to her marriage to a man whom she could not love for he hardly understood her feelings. Her mother remained contented seeing Mira married and pregnant. But Mira did not share her sorrows and disappointments with her mother as she felt alienated from her. However, her mother knew it but did not want to face it. Mira says, “She knew I was not happy, I knew it; but she was afraid to ask me, afraid I would admit it.”(126)

The filial relationship between Shakutai and her daughter Kalpana is also a relationship of conflict between tradition and modernity. Shakutai tries to find meaning in her life by giving her daughter all the facilities which were denied to her—good education, a good job and a respectable
marriage. But all her dreams are frustrated by her daughter’s reckless and brainless behaviour like painting her lips, dressing herself up and moving about with strangers without knowing her own biologically determined limitations. She asks her, “...if you paint and flaunt yourself, do you think they’ll leave you alone?”(146) But Kalpana refused to be guided by the dictates of her mother. She does not like to be like her mother. She says, “To make myself in your image was never the goal I sought.”(124)She is stubborn and unfeeling towards her mother. Shakutai says, “...she never tells me anything. She didn’t even tell me how much her pay was, ...me, her own mother. As if I was going to take her money away from her! I don’t want anything.”(92) According to Basavraj Naikar: “Thus the mother and the daughter exemplify two contrastive patterns of behaviour, but ironically enough, both of them suffer in their own ways.”(2001:124-125)She is very concerned for her grown up daughter. She is afraid of the boys of her chawl because they behaved “like dogs panting after bitches.”(146)She even thinks of marrying Kalpana to Sulu’s husband, Prabhakar. But when Kalpana outrightly rejects Prabhakar and decides to marry a boy of her own choice, Prabhakar rapes her brutally. Shakutai’s apprehension comes true. She holds her responsible for it. Kalpana’s rape results in her going into comma. For Shakutai she is “neither dead nor alive.”(86) She is looking after her in the hospital but she does not believe that her daughter has been raped. She is not in favour of reporting the case to police. She seeks the help of Vanna and Urmi but wants to keep Kalpana’s molestation a secret. She says, “...don’t tell anyone. I’ll never be able to hold my head again, who’ll marry the girl, we’re decent people.”(58)She has to suffer from the disgrace and dishonour brought about by her daughter’s freedom, recklessness and lack of practical wisdom. She is a frustrated mother. Kalpana’s lying unconscious in the hospital brings her mother’s life to a halt, with everything else held in abeyance. Shakutai’s relationship with her daughter is now marked by a strong element of mourning. She remembers her past life - her sense of joy in life, her acts of disobedience, her vitality, etc. But she is overcome with feelings of helplessness. Shakutai and Kalpana belong to the lower strata of society and represent working class women but their relationship as mother and daughter is not different from their counterparts from the middle class families.

The mother-daughter relationship between Vanna and Mandira is a restrained one. Vanna is a medical social worker. Her job keeps her away from her daughter and Mandira feels neglected. She dislikes to be left to the care of the maid servant, Hirabai. She says, “I don’t want Hirabai, I want
my mother.”(72) She hates and hurts her mother saying, “You’re always making fun of me. You’re cruel. I’ll never talk to you again.”(31) She tells Urmi that she would never leave her children alone when she becomes a mother. The gap widens between them as, according to A. G. Khan:

...Mandira fails to understand her mother’s compulsions in negotiating between family and profession and Vanna is equally unable to diagnose the tantrums of her daughter, who needs her mother’s presence and affection. (2005:166)

Shashi Deshpande’s presentation of mother-daughter relationship in A Matter of Time is different from her other novels. The daughters of Sumi, the protagonist, feel oppressed by their mother’s miseries. Aru, Sumi’s elder daughter, loves her mother and wants her mother to live a happy life. She is angry with her father, Gopal, who has caused misery to her mother by deserting her along with her children and placed them in an outer circle. She asks him, “Why did you get married at all, why did you have children?”(62) When Sumi breaks down, the mother-daughter relationships are reversed. Aru moves forward to steady her mother.”(34) and Charu holds the sobbing Sumi close to her own body and “rocks her, as if she is the mother and her mother her child, until both of them are soothed into a tearless calm.”(112) Aru is piqued with her mother for not taking a stand against Gopal, her husband. According to Usha Bande, Aru represents the young modern generation: “In Aru’s resistance there is the younger generation’s impatience and restlessness to obtain justice. Not only their mother, Sumi but also their grandmother comes under their scathing censure. Aru and her sisters cannot take in their grandmother’s placid attitude and refusal to explain the circumstances under which her son was lost. Sometimes they have an eerie suspicion that Kalyani may have let him get lost because he was mentally handicapped.” (2005:196) Sumi wants her daughters to be unchequered by unhappiness, easy and comfortable. She says, “I want her to enjoy the good things in life, want her to taste life. I want her to relish it and not spit it out because she finds it bitter.”(220) But Sumi along with her father is killed in a scooter accident suddenly just before her taking up a job to support herself and her daughters.

Sumi’s relationship with her mother, Kalyani, is also harmonious. When Sumi is deserted, Kalyani is visibly upset to know it. She cries, “No...no... my God, not again...”(12) She brings her daughter home. She
goes to Gopal and pleads for his return home. She takes the entire responsibility of Sumi’s “carelessness” on herself, apologises for Sumi’s shortcomings as a wife and asks him to forgive her failings. She says, “But...how could she have known what being a good wife means when she never saw her mother being one? I taught her nothing, it’s my fault, Gopala, forgive me and don’t punish her for it.”(47)She also assures him that Sumi will inherit all her jewellery, but in vain. Kalyani does place Sumi firmly in the role of a subordinate who had failed to please, but it shows her love and concern for the well-being of her daughter.

But Kalyani’s relationship with her mother, Manorama, was not harmonious. Manorama resented the birth of her daughter as she wanted a son. Then she forces her daughter to marry her younger brother, Shripati, who too was unwilling to marry Kalyani, because she wanted to keep the property in the family. She even holds Kalyani responsible for her sorrows and calls her an enemy. But Kalyani, a strong woman with surviving power, survives her mother’s myriad acts of cruelty. Kalyani tells her granddaughter, Aru: “My mother didn’t care for my children either. Daughters again, she said...I am luckier than my mother. She is one unlucky who didn’t know how to enjoy her children and grandchildren.”(26) Kalyani failed her mother on many counts - she was neither beautiful nor intelligent and not even healthy and she had adopted the strategy of resisting her mother’s dominance by her stoic silence.

Shashi Deshpande’s *Small Remedies* presents an unconventional relationship between Savitribai Indorker and her daughter, Munni. Savitribai, who wanted to pursue music as a career, had left her home and husband to live with her Tabla Master, Gulam Saab. She had abandoned her previous marital identity by throwing away her surname “Joshi” and using her maiden surname ‘Indorker’ to live with her Muslim lover. They lived at Neemgaon and Munni was born out of that union. But Savitri bai and Munni never enjoyed a normal filial relationship. Munni always worked in opposition to her mother, resented the father foisted on her and the loss of her family name. Her view of life was rooted in a sense of community of which she was deprived. So like Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, she wants to distance her mother in everything. She “hankered for the name her mother had left behind; she yearned for the conventional life Bai had found so stultifying.”(169)

Munni’s whole effort is spent in rejecting this paternity and in breaking away from this life in pursuit of normalcy which her mother had destroyed by taking to music as a profession. She managed to forge a new
identity for herself as a conventional Hindu woman and took the name Shailaja Joshi. She wiped out her mother from her memory. Savitribai too obliterates Munni’s existence for the sake of her career and never mentions her daughter. She is also not obsessed by the need for love and discards her daughter’s love as she had discarded her family to pursue her career. She suppresses all mention of Munni when she is being interviewed by Madhu for her autobiography. Thus the mother and the daughter work in opposite directions and while the mother is almost ruthless in the pursuit of her talent, the daughter is equally determined to seek anonymity in the folds of a family. Both of them deny each other. Savitribai reveals the scar of having been rejected by her own child and the agony of rejecting that child, her daughter, Munni to Madhu who is writing her biography and who finds her interesting as a mother and a woman. According to Usha Bande:

She (Madhu) would rather not project Bai as the world wants to see her. It is not the story of heroism that attracts her: it is the mother in Bai, the woman in her who suffers in silence, struggles and triumphs through her life’s journey that is far more revealing than the singer who eloped for love. (2005:199)

Savitribai remains unreconciled to her daughter as Munni suddenly dies in a communal violence that stirred up as political revenge after Babari Masjid demolition. Her rejection of Munni dismantles the conventional image of a sacrificing and caring mother and projects another aspect of motherhood.

The filial relationship in Shashi Deshpande’s Moving On is very sweet in the beginning but turns sour later on. Both Manjari and Malu enjoyed an intimate relationship with their parents in their childhood. Manjari recollects those moments in the following words:

The door of their room was always open. If I woke up at night, I knew I could go straight inside. Malu and I went into their room on Sunday morning when they woke up late; we climbed on the high bed, smuggling between our parents, kicking each other as we got under the covers. And we’d found our places,(mine next to Baba, Malu next to Mai) and made ourselves comfortable, I would inhale with rapture what was to us a Baba-and-Mai-smell, the smell of cosiness, of being loved and petted. The smell indeed of happiness itself.(115)
Mai was the centre of their universe and without their mother they felt to be in the state of suspended living. Manjari, the protagonist, loved and respected her mother so much that she could not tolerate any form of assault on her dignity. While in Bangalore, at R. K’s house, when she saw that R. K’s sister’s sons were imitating the song of Mai, making fun of her, she pounced on them like a fury: “I caught hold of one of them, grasping whatever I could get hold of, his hair, his shirt, his ears and pummelled him mercilessly, sobbing at the same time.”(121) When Mai took her to task for quarrelling with them, she did not let her know that they were ridiculing her as it would have been an affront to her dignity. She was also very protective of her if anyone was smiling at her Marathi accented, often wrong, English.

But their relationship became bitter when Manjari decided to marry Shyam. Her father wanted her to finish her medical education. Mai was opposed to her marriage with Shyam because he was a Sindhi. She said, “Look at you, still wearing a skirt like a school girl! And you want to get married!”(248) But she suddenly surrendered when in total angry frustration, Manjari chopped off her hair one day, her long hair which Mai had been so proud of. Manjari later felt that she had brought chaos into her mother’s life by marrying Shyam, by her insistence on marrying him immediately. She longed for her parents just a month after her marriage to Shyam. When she was in distress owing to Anand’s illness and Shyam’s refusal to do anything for him, she had come to her parents for Anand’s treatment. Anand’s birth had reconciled her to Mai. But when Mai along with Baba came to Manjari’s house, she behaved like a guest telling Manjari to wait on her. Her father helped her with her chores and it was like the old days when they did things together. His manners indicated that he had forgiven her and perhaps Mai had forgiven her too. Manjari recollects:

And yet, when going, most usually for her, passed her hand lightly over my cheek, then touched her own fingers to her lips. The rare and wonderfully tender gesture of love that was reserved for her softest moment. After they’d gone, I sobbed until it was time for Shyam to come home. (266)

But it hurt her that Mai had not forgiven Shyam: “She didn’t speak of him, no, not once, and she chose to go away just before she knew he was to return.”(266) Perhaps Mai thought that Shyam was responsible for Manjari’s strained relationship with her. Manjari
had betrayed her to get closer to Shyam. And she could not make up with her mother for this act. She reflects: “I suppose I’d thought that Mai and I had a life time before us to make up, to go back to being mother and daughter again. Instead, she had slept away, leaving me full of sorrow and anger.” (223) When Raja accuses Manjari of not wishing to see her dying mother whose leg was amputated and body was stinking, Manjari explains to him:

I did not want to see her because to see her was like going back to the scene of the crime, the crime both of us had committed. I often thought of us as murderers; I thought we had murdered both Malu and Shyam. Sometimes I thought of myself as the First Murderer and Mai as the Second Murderer, sometimes, it was the other way round. (323)

However, she went to see her mother not because Raja had shamed her but because she knew she had to. She sat by her mother who was unconscious and tried to reach her and reconcile to her: “I sat by her, I held her hand. I told her all the things I thought she wanted to hear from me. ..I knew it was not possible that she could hear me. And yet, there was some hope that may be she did; ...” (323) Her mother died within an hour of reaching her bedside. She felt miserable when she prepared her mother for her last journey: “My heart- felt heavy, like a rock in my chest, as we did these things. When we had done, when we put the flowers on her, I looked for the first time and saw how peaceful she looked. It was as if I’d brought peace back to her face.” (324) Manjari had cried, “Mai, Mai” when she was distraught after Shyam’s death and her father had asked her to forgive her mother and reconcile to her parents but all these were insignificant now.

Manjari often felt that her mother’s love was bondage; it was a devouring love, a possessive love and she knew how to keep one in her bonds as her slave. She could break this maternal bondage only after falling in love with Shyam. But later her own restrained relationship with her children, Anand and Sachi, reminds her of Mai’s words spoken to her in one of their quarrels, “One day, when you have children of your own, you will know how children can break your heart. And then you will think of me, of what you are doing to me.” (2006). She tells her cousin, Raja:

I must be one of the few unfortunate mothers whose children have higher standards than them...They’re always looking down on me. And making their disapproval of me clear. Anand makes me feel
sinful. When I use a word he thinks mothers shouldn’t use! And Sachi...! (68)

Obviously mother-daughter relationship remains the same in the second generation. Another mother-daughter relationship between Nirmala and her mother, briefly mentioned in Moving On is also not harmonious. Nirmala gives up her job to look after her paralytic mother but her mother is demanding and tyrannical, impossible to be pleased.

Shashi Deshpande’s In the Country of Deceit presents a variety of filial relationship. Devayani alias Devi, the protagonist, had a harmonious relationship with her mother, Pushpa. She used to play the games of self-denial for her parents when she was a school going child, saying, “I won’t read a book for two weeks, let Appa be happy; I won’t buy anything, I won’t go anywhere, let Amma be all right.”(226) When she grew up she shared her mother’s job. She took on most of her burden of her elder sister, Savita’s wedding though she was only seventeen. When her father died she shouldered all the responsibilities left behind and stayed with her mother at Rajnur. When her mother fell ill, she looked after her so well that her mother once told her sister-in-law, Sindhu: “I never knew a mother’s love, but the way Devi looks after me, I feel as if I finally have a mother.”(119) Sindhu finds in Devi the qualities of her own mother. She tells Devi,

I think in some way you are like your mother. She didn’t have the instinct of self-protection, she did not know how to look after herself, how to guard herself from hurt-physical or otherwise. You are the same. (118)

She was always by the side of her mother when she was completely bedridden. She enjoyed her mother’s trust and confidence. Her mother said that Devi was “transparent as a clean piece of glass…You can’t hide anything from me.”(147) When Iqbal, the lawyer, wants to explore the possibility of her mother’s selling the 32 acre plot of land without telling her daughter about it, she asserts: “Excuse me, but before we go on like this I must tell you that my mother had no secrets from me. We shared everything. So don’t keep saying that she did something without telling me.”(57) When her mother died, she did nothing but watched her struggle to breathe for two years. It had cut her off from everything else. It was only after the mother’s death that she moved to her cousin, Kshama, at Bangalore. Devi and Savi want to fight the case to recover the piece of land
gifted to their mother by their maternal grandfather, for the sake of their mother who was a gentle and soft person but injustice made her angry. Pushpa too had deep love and concern for her daughter whom she had given the name Devayani because she wanted another brave woman’s name-Devayani is a reckless, arrogant and stupid girl of the Mahabharata. She wanted Devayani to marry and settle in life and she was very worried when Devi kept rejecting every man she and Sindhu thought was a possible groom for her. Before her death she had made her sister-in-law promise to her that she would take on the responsibility of her marriage after her death.

However, other filial relationships presented in the novel are not pleasant. Pushpa herself did not get love and intimacy from her mother. The family photograph shows 12 year old Pushpa standing behind her mother, but away from her mother’s chair. Her body is rigid, her face a little fearful as if the suppressed fury on her mother’s face is meant for her. Devi says about her mother, “My mother had suffered from epilepsy when she was a child and had become the victim of her mother’s fury after that, or, who knows even before that.”(106)But Pushpa was very kind and considerate to her mother. She had brought her mother home to live with her family, when she could no longer be left alone. Her mother abused her and accused her of stealing her money and jewels but she bore it all heroically. When she was not able to cope with her mother physically, she got Neelava to help her. But her mother’s curses became louder. When Savi, her elder daughter, asked her to send the old woman somewhere, she asked her a counter question, “Will you do that to me when I am old and alone?”(106)Devi writes about her:

I can remember my mother standing outside the door, her hands on her ears, her body taut with tension, her face fearfull, her eyes full of tears. When my grandmother died, Neelava comforted her saying, “Don’t cry, Pushpaakka, you did her best, don’t cry.”(107)

Sindhu’s mother did not listen to her daughter’s arguments. Once when her mother spoke of two Ekadashis coming together, she argued, “Ekadashi is the eleventh day. So if one day is the eleventh day, the next has to be the twelfth day. If there are two eleventh days, it means the earth has stopped moving. Which can never happen.” And her mother silences her saying, “Stop arguing and go away.”(20)She also played a dirty trick on her daughter. She did not recognize her marriage to Keshav and the children born out of their union. That way she neatly avoided being sucked into Tara’s child bearing programme.
But Sindhu does not blame her. When she becomes the mother of three children, she feels sympathy for her mother. She writes to Devi:

She had very little time for us. She was constantly struggling with problems like, no rain or too much rain, or would there be good crops, or coping with the labourers. And money always money. Once her daughters grew up she had to find grooms for them, to organize the money for their weddings. Then came their pregnancies and their deliveries, looking after them and the babies for at least three months. And always the festivals, rituals. Shradhas, thread ceremonies, weddings. Where did she have the time to care for us. I don’t remember her even combing my hair or giving me an oil bath. (118)

Sindhu’s relationship with her own children is not satisfactory. Her grown up children seem to be stranger to her. She tells Devi:

I must confess to you, Putta, that these are times when my children seem like strangers to me. I wonder what these three adults have to do with the little children I brought up. Vidya, I have finally learnt to recognize, is cold and lives in her own world, Gundu wants to get away from us, but can’t and is greedy for our attention and Tara is a spoilt brat...I thought I was a good mother, Putta, that I left my children to lead their own lives. Suddenly it seems that it makes me a bad mother. (117)

Gundu and Vidya found their own partners, only Tara asked her parents to look for a man for her. Sindhu tells Devi that her own children had taught her how futile it is to advise anyone to pass on the benefits of her experience to the next generation: “Nobody wants your advice. I sometimes think how strange it is that we can never pass on the benefits of our experience to the next generation.”(41) Gundu gets furious when his mother asks him to make a small independent place for her and Keshav with an attached kitchen when he would go for alterations in the existing house. He offers to move out of the house if his parents do not want to stay with him and his wife, Asha. Sindhu lives with Tara and her husband Sudhir. They have told her to use the phone as she wants to talk to her relatives in India. But Tara is embarrassed and annoyed when her mother comes home drunk after eating out with Alexander. Sindhu tells Devi, “She has very strict rules for mothers and I seem to break so many of them. I often think she puts up with me because of her father.”(43) But when
Sindhu falls ill, she changes and tells her mother, “Now that I’m a mother myself, I understand you much better.” (116) She again returns to her former self again and accuses Sindhu of caring more about others, about her students, about Savi and Devi and not about her own children. Sindhu is against her quantification of love so precisely as she asks Devi,

Is there a law or a rule that we should care most about those to whom we’re linked by blood? It happens naturally with babies; the bond is so close, it’s almost painful. But must we feel the same way about grown up children...? (117)

The filial relationship between Priya Ranjan alias Rani and her twins Rohan and Neha who belong to high class is marked by distance and disinterestedness. They are not allowed into their mother’s bed room. Rani’s attitude to her children is casual. She seems almost uncaring, content to let her children spend most of their time with Lakshami, an illiterate servant girl. She goes to Bombay at least twice a month, leaving the children with her sister-in-law, Uma. Devi notices the lack of filial emotion an intimacy amongst Rohan, Neha and Rani. But Rani tells Devi that it was for the children that she decided to come back. She did not want them to grow there amidst the terrorist violence. But often she regretted it : “I think it was a mistake coming to Rajnur. I thought it would be good for the children. I felt they needed to be with their family.” (155-156) But Neha and Rohan did not receive family feeling from K N’s family.

However, Rani shows filial love and concern for Roshni, the daughter from her first marriage with Prem. After their separation, Prem’s parents had taken charge of Roshni and she lived happily with her paternal grandparents. Rani’s brother and his wife had also become a part of their family. She often came to meet her mother and Neha and Rohan. Rani calls her, “My Roshni.” But Roshni does not have a cordial relationship with her father and mother. She sees her father as a pretender and a cheat. She holds her mother in contempt and never misses a chance to set herself apart from her. She objects to her mother’s calling Devi ‘Devayani’, corrects her to call her ‘Devyani’ and runs down her saying, “ ‘De-va-ya-ni’-that’s four syllables. ‘Dev-ya-ni’-that’s three syllables. The trouble is you North Indians never pronounce Sanskrit words correctly.” (166) She refuses to carry her mother’s message to her father and holds the phone out before her and when they have enough of it, she would snatch the phone from her mother to stop the conversation. She tells Devi about
her life with her quarrelling parents: “I had tough time between the two of them. I’m the referee. I have to blow the whistle, separate them and give them yellow and red cards. Ma gets more red cards. She gets so angry but he remains cool.”(167) She had refused to go and visit her mother when she was in California(USA). She explains the reason and runs down her mother again: “My Ajji is not well...I can’t leave her and go. Ma does not understand. She thinks everyone is like her, that we can walk out on people and relationships as easily as she can.”(168) She does not want to follow the footsteps of her mother to join modelling or acting. She does not want her mother to return to the film world. She fears the same predicament for Neha and Rohan if she returns to films. She says, “I don’t know why she wants to go back to that murky world...And once she does this movie, she’ll do the same to Neha and Rohan. She’ll go back to movies and leave them there.”(169) Rani knows that Roshni has not forgiven her for going away from her to Mahesh, but she loves her daughter to the extent that, despite being so self-sufficient and impregnable, she remains a different person with her. “She was blundering, tentative, vulnerable, afraid...of being rebuffed.”(167-168) One of the reasons as to why she had decided to come back to India was to see more of Roshni. Rani gets worried over Roshni’s affair with a boy: “I don’t like him. He looks hungry—you know how some men are? He even looks at me the same way. Like this!” (241) When Rani had an accident, Roshni was with her mother all the time. When she along with K N was going to the USA for a change and better treatment, Roshni was the only one she wanted to accompany.

The filial relationship between Kamala and her daughter, Kshama is a mixture of bitter–sweet relationship. Kamala was proud of Kshama and she spoke to her relatives about her brilliance, her academic achievements and triumphs and her desire to go to Oxford, to become an economist and to join the World Bank. Kshama thought her mother’s life to be extremely boring but later she realized that it was because her mother coped with the boring chores that her father, her brother and she were free to do other things. She comes to love her mother so much that she refuses to leave her mother alone at night to stay with Devi.

Shashi Deshpande’s depiction of filial relationship shows an opposite trend in Savi’s relationship with her son and daughter. Unlike Kamala’s treatment of her son, Dhruva, and daughter, Saru, Kamala is partial to her daughter, Charu. When Arjun is ill, she tells Savi,
I’ve been wicked, I’ve given Charu more love, more attention, I’ve always taken her side against Arjun. I’m being punished, yes, this’s my punishment. I’ll never do it again, I promise, I’ll never be unfair to Arjun again, only let him get well, my God, let him be all right...(177)

She is really partial to Charu because of the death of her daughter. She tells Devi that she had filled the gap created by her dead daughter, the twin of Arjun: “I thought Charu was my dead baby come back to me, that’s why I was so partial to her.”(177-178)Filial love has changed Savi. Devi reflects when she sees Savi sleeping between her children, holding them close to her: “I thought of Savi as a girl, carefree, unburdened by her ties, clear about what she wanted, focused on it. And now humbled, her corner softened, her edges blunted, not by marriage, but by children.”(183)

The relationship of Shree, Savi’s husband, with her parents is also not harmonious. His parents did not feel comfortable with their extended family. His bureaucrat father always posed as an official, distant and aloof. His mother was hostile to children other than her own. But when Shree and Savi decided to marry, her hostility came out in the open. During the wedding, she seemed to be going through the motions, enduring not participating.

II

Father-daughter relationship which is another aspect of filial relationship has not been portrayed on a wide canvas in the novels of Shashi Deshpande, but it has certainly been presented in a positive light. The fathers in her novels do present the various facets of masculinity and patriarchy in Indian society, but they are more progressive and broad-minded than mothers. They act as true guide and supporter and contribute significantly in multidimensional development of their daughters who happen to be the protagonists in the novels. They allow their daughters to go for higher studies and to marry for love and they are often scrutinized and criticized for such acts by the wider social community, but their privileged position in the domestic hierarchy is not openly challenged. A study of her novels reveals that fathers are always loved and trusted more than mothers.
The Dark Holds No Terrors presents that Saru’s relationship with her father is to some extent normal. He remained aloof in her early life leaving the upbringing of his daughter to his wife who dominated the household. Like most conservative fathers, he thought that “daughters are their mother’s business” and kept a distance from Saru. The distance increased when he did not come forward to protect her from the onslaught of her mother after the death of her younger brother, Dhruva. But he supported her against his wife in joining a medical college in Bombay which brought a turning point in Saru’s life. Saru recollects those crucial moments in the following words: “I won that time. But I was not alone then. Baba was with me. He helped me. Without him I would never have succeeded.”(139) But he did not approve of her inter-caste marriage. Even then he becomes for her a fountain of goodwill, trust and confidence after her mother’s death. When Saru comes to him to condole her mother’s death, he is very kind and considerate to her. He absolves her of her mother’s blame for killing Dhruva by saying, “Sometimes, I used to think you took your mother seriously and blamed yourself for Dhruva’s death. You know she was not herself when she said that.”(181) When Saru tells him about Manu’s nightly sexual abuse, he listens carefully and patiently the minute details of her sick sex life and, despite his traditional outlook, he urges her to talk to Manu about the problem instead of running away from him out of cowardice. He advises her: “Give him a chance...stay and meet him. Talk to him. Let him know from you what is wrong...Don’t turn your back on things again. Turn around and look at them.”(216) He makes her realise that the onus to set things right was upon her and that she would have to act in an assertive manner to resolve the conflict. “You are your own refuge. There is no other refuge. This refuge is hard to achieve.”(221) He also explained to her that her mother was also damaged as a child in the house of her grandfather, where she did not belong to but was simply tolerated and thus he enables her to see her mother in right perspective. Obviously, her father proves to be an important force in Saru’s evolution. Arindam Chatterjee compares Saru’s father’s role to that of a mother in the following words: “Tending and nursing his daughter now like a caring mother, he not only absolves Sarita completely from any blame or guilt, but also explains why her mother acted the way she did.”(2005:105)

Mriga in If I Die Today has an adverse relationship with her father. She wishes her hard-hearted father were dead. She once dreams of her imaginary accident and her admission to a hospital where her rude father would come rushing, and then she would console him: “Don’t cry daddy.” And then I
would die with a smile on my face and he would be heart-broken for ever after.”(91) But Kshama Rao in *Come Up and Be Dead* is so close to her father that she resented any attention given by him to Pratap, her younger brother. Her father has a tremendous influence on her life. He encourages her to have ambitions and pursue them. Devayani, another character in the novel, is also very close to her father. After his death she faces a horrible time of total despairing emptiness. She says, “I’m alone, yes, but I’ll get used to that. I’ll secure myself against suffering by always being alone.”(106) She does not relate to either her sister, Sumi or her cousin, Kshama. She also remains aloof from Dr. Girish who wants to get close to her. At the end she decides to live at her own home, her father’s home.

Indu, the protagonist in *Roots and Shadows*, is a motherless child and she sees her father, Govind, almost as God. He is a journalist and so, he remains away from her most of the time. She was brought to the ancestral home at Moregaon when barely 15 days old and was reared by her father’s family—a joint family having many surrogate fathers like Kaka and Old Uncle. But she never missed her father and her attitude towards her father is quite unambiguous. He arranges for her English medium education, unlike her cousins who studied in Vernacular medium schools, and gave her the necessary head start in life. When she married Jayant, only her father along with her elder brother ‘Kaka’ was present. She followed her father in becoming a freelance journalist and her quest for self-identity ends in her resolve to be honest to herself, like her father, in writing what she wanted to write and not what she should write.

Jaya, the protagonist in *That Long Silence* is deeply attached to her father, a playwright, a Sanskrit scholar and a freedom fighter who had given up studies in Gandhi’s name. His attitudes and values played an important role in shaping her personality and her growth as an individual. He was a dreamer like her and he took her for cycle rides. While the other males in the family ignored the females, her father gave his affection unstinted to his daughter and, unlike Saru’s father in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, he always tried to make up for the indifference of her mother who had a marked preference for her sons. He not only supported her against her mother but also demonstrated his affection towards her openly. Jaya was closer to her father than to her mother and she felt free to complain to her father against her mother’s discriminatory treatment saying, “She (Ai) behaves as if she owns
me.”(75). She could reason out with him as to why she should not listen to the song broadcast on radio. He had sent her to a Convent School much to the disapproval of her orthodox grandmother. He constantly encouraged her to be self-reliant and not to copy other girls as she was different from her cousins: “You are not like others, Jaya,” Appa had said to me, pulling me ruthlessly out of the safe circle in which the other girls had stood...girls who asked for nothing more than the destiny of being wives and mothers.”(136) He had given her name ‘Jaya’ which meant ‘victory’ and reminded her again and again that she must be a victor. His support and guidance are influential in developing Jaya’s fundamental attitudes and principles. When she left her home after getting married, her father had advised her to be always good to Mohan and she, at all times, tried her best to follow his advice. Her father had given her much more than her mother or brother could give her and his sudden death was a shattering experience to her. He is perhaps the most ‘feminist’ among the fathers in Shashi Deshpande’s novels as he never displays any gender bias towards his daughter and ever nurtures her to become an independent and individualistic person.

In Deshpande’s other novel, *The Binding Vine*, Urmi’s father is quite different from the fathers of other protagonists. Urmi esteems her father as a ‘firm’ and ‘pragmatic’ and ‘just’ and ‘wise’ person. But later she is shocked to know about his act of cruelty and injustice to her mother and herself. Although her mother tells her the reason for her father’s strange decision—she was sent because Inni had left her with a male servant, Diwakar, alone, thus shocking her father who never excused Inni for that lapse—yet her younger brother, Amrut, corrects her perspective when he says, “Even to force your will on other is brutal.”(133) Kalpana, another character in the novel, is closer to her father than to her mother. His father has left her mother along with her three children for another woman, but Kalpana saw it as a failure of her mother. “You drove him away”, she said, “You’re always angry, always quarrelling, that’s why he is gone.”(93) She gives her father money more easily than she gives her mother and she does not mind her father using that money for gambling. Her father comes to see her in the hospital where she is admitted after a brutal rape and joins her mother in this moment of crisis. He has tears in his eyes when he speaks of Kalpana and has brought sweets for his younger daughter, Sandhya. Another daughter in the novel, Mandira, hates and hurts her mother, Vanna, but she never complains against her father, Harish. But in *A Matter of Time* Aru is angry with her run away father, Gopal. Her father’s desertion has brought with it social stigma and myriad of unanswerable questions. Her searing questions:
“Why did you marry? Why did you have children?” leave her father puzzled. Madhu Saptarishi, the protagonist in *Small Remedies*, had lost her mother in the early childhood and was brought up by her freedom loving father with the help of a male servant named Babu. He observed no rituals and openly indulged in drinking wine. But Madhu is gently possessive of her father and is shocked by the idea of his having a mistress. But Munni another daughter in the novel is vehemently opposed to her father, Ghulam Saab. Her mother had left her Brahmin husband and household to live with Ghulam Saab, a tabla master, in pursuit of her career in music. As their alliance had no social sanction, Munni who was born of their union, was often tormented by the girls in the neighbourhood with the questions: “What’s your name? What’s your father’s name? Where’s your father? Who’s the man who lives with your mother?”(77) Muni refuses to accept her mother’s lover as her father and instead concocted stories about a lawyer father who lived in Pune. She goes to great lengths to dissociate herself from her father. She changes her name from ‘Muni’ to Shailja Joshi to wipe out her connection with her parents, to escape the poisoned barbs of people and to seek approval of society.

The father-daughter relationship in *Moving On* has various faces. Manjari, the protagonist, is always on her father’s side. She reflects:

> When the four of us were together, Baba and I formed one team, Malu and Mai the other. Baba and I were the protectors, the shepherds, the ones who went ahead and booked the tickets, secured the seats made things comfortable. We were the pavers of the way, smoothers of the path, the Walter Raleigh to their Queen Elizabeth. (304)

Her father enjoyed the company of his children. He wrote in his diary on 10-03-1997:

> I was surprised myself by the joy, by the amount of joy I got from my children. Sometimes I think it’s not my children itself that creates happiness. I see childhood as a repeated happy motif in our lives: first our own, then our children’s and finally our grandchildren’s. (55)

She has a very frank and friendly relationship with her father. She could even ask for a drink from Raja (Gin and Limca) in her father’s presence. When Raja accuses her of discourtesy to her father, she could ask him a straight question: “Baba, do you mind my having a drink?”(63-64) and her
father replies in the negative. But she objects to her relationship with Shyam because she was young and it was going to interrupt her medical education. He wanted her to wait but she did not. He had warned, “You’ll regret it.”(235) but she never did. Rather he had to repent for what he himself did to his daughter by becoming a blind follower of his wife. He admits,

I made the mistake of trying to shape Jiji’s life...We come to life as individuals; to be a parent is to be an instrument, the means of letting another human being enter the world and have the experience of living—that’s all. But I thought my daughter’s life was mine to shape.

(241)

He had offered to pay her fees for continuing her study of medicine, even as a loan if she did not want any obligation. But Manjari decided to give up medicine. She apologised to him as he was very much hurt by her decision, but he did not mind. He just said to her, “It’s your life. You have to live it the way you want. As long you’re happy...”(250) He also regrets being away from her daughter and grand children for long. He never lost his love for them. When he is lying with illness, he is happy to learn that his daughter is coming. He says, “Even if we are no longer Baba and Jiji we once were to each other, I am grateful that she will be with me till the last day, that I will not die alone.”(114) and “...that she will hold my hand when I’m going.”(245) To have Manjari and her children was the last bit of joy in his life. He regrets that he had found that joy so late. He worries for her till his death as he says, “Am I holding on because of Jiji, because of my concern for Jiji?”(304) He thinks that pointlessness and emptiness of her life will force her into confronting her past, let go of it and move on. Manjari feels blank after the death of her father: “…a blankness that carried a sense of anarchy.”(61) She keeps her father’s collection of books for herself.

Manjadi’s daughter, Sachi, is eager to know about her dead father, Shyam. When she learns from her mother that her father was a cinematographer, she gets interested in film-making and assists her friend’s sister in making a documentary. But the relationship between Hemi, a mentally retarded child, and her Father, B K, is not positive. B K understands that Hemi is not normal. He calls her “a monster.” (93) But her mother, Kamala who takes her to be normal and hopes that marriage will transform her from eccentric woman to happy wife and mother, blames B K for not getting her married and
calls him, “a cruel infecting father who’s failed in his duty towards his daughter.” (94)

Devi, the protagonist in In the Country of Deceit is sympathetic to her father. She thought her father to be unlucky. She tells Iqbal, “Everything he did failed.” (59) He had left his job in a bank and tried his luck in different fields like farming, writing, editing magazine, printing press, insurance agency, etc. but failed. He had not been able to provide adequate facilities to his children who suffered humiliation of living in a godforsaken place, of wearing shabby home-stitched clothes with the let-down hems showing, of reading second-hand books and of being told in the class that their fees had not been paid. Savi, her younger sister, was resentful but Devi could understand his problems. He was the eldest son of his irresponsible father. He had taken on the burden of his younger siblings’ education, of his sister’s marriage. His dreams remained incomplete and he committed suicide—he was run over by a train at a level crossing. Devi remembers her dead father when she was recovering from her injuries in a car accident:

I was haunted by memories of my father, of the darkness in which he had lived, of the despair that had driven him to his death. For the first time, I felt myself close to him, I could understand how it had been for him, of why he had done what he had. (249)

He had jumped before a train.

Devi’s mother, Pushpa, enjoyed the love and care of her father, Krishna Bhatt. When she was suffering from a lingering disease in her childhood, he took her to a doctor after seeking the treatment of a vaid for sometimes. He feels relieved to hear from the neurologist that his daughter will be helped by medication and may be completely cured. He feels ashamed of not taking proper care of his ailing daughter and taking her to a ‘vaid’ instead of consulting a doctor earlier. He writes to his friend, Vasudev Rao:

I call myself the head of the family, it was my duty and responsibility to look after my daughter’s health problem. It is easy for me to blame Pushpa’s mother, but did I try to do anything? I tell you, Vasu, I am more ashamed of myself than I have ever been. (102-103)

He feels sorry for allowing his wife to take Pushpa out of school and blames himself for not taking proper care of her because she was a daughter. He asks,
“If Pushpa had been a son instead a daughter, would I have behaved in the same way? The answer I get is ‘no’. I would have gone from doctor to doctor from hospital to hospital, I would have spent any amount of money.”(103) He tries to compensate for the deprivation suffered by his daughter when he shifted to Bombay. He gets Palit Sir to teach her at home. He wants her to do matriculation privately and then go to college. He wants a good husband for her in his life time. He writes: “And to tell you the truth, I can’t imagine what her life will be if I go first and leave her to her mother. I can see her a wife and a mother before I die, I will be a happy man.”(103) He also gifts her the land he had bought on Hatthihola Road for building a school, keeping it a secret from Kamala, his elder daughter as he was giving Pushpa more than her.

Devi’s lover, Ashok Chinappa, loved his daughter very much. While living at Rajnur alone, he misses his nine year old daughter and so, he converses with Rani’s children to overcome his longing for her. According to Devi, threaded through the design of his life was the strong strand of his love for his daughter, a thread that linked him, whether he liked it or not, to his life. Ashok ends his extra-marital affair with Devi for the sake of his daughter as he tells her while taking leave of her, “I’m sorry Divya, I’m sorry. I can’t lose my daughter, I can’t let her lose me..”(254) Roshni, Rani’s daughter from her previous marriage, does not have a cordial relationship with her father, Prem. She sees her father as a pretender and cheat. She tells Devi,

He never married after Ma left him...He likes the world to think his heart was broken. What sit! He’s having a great time. He changes girl friends like he changes his shirts. All the time.Women! Most of them are girls, only a little older than me. And can you believe it, he wants me to be friends with them! I want to tell them-don’t believe anything this man tells you. Poor things, I don’t know how they can believe him. I can tell in a moment from his face that he’s telling lies. (166)

III

Mother-son relationship is one of the most celebrated filial relationships in Indian myths and literature. A woman feels fulfilled and secured as a mother after giving birth to a son and so she prefers a son to a daughter. A
mother is attached to her son because he will propagate the family lineage, look after his parents in their old age and lit up their funeral pyre after their death. The soul of the dead persons would otherwise wander in ferment.

Kamala in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is a typical mother who shows the usual son preference. After Dhruva’s birth all her parental love and care is showered on Dhruva. She joyfully celebrates his naming ceremony. She thinks that Dhruva would propagate the family lineage and so, she wants to inculcate manly qualities of courage and toughness in him. She makes four year old Dhruva sleep alone in a room by himself. But Dhruva was terrified of darkness and used to wait until his mother was asleep and then crawled into his sister’s bed waking her up. But he does not want this secret revealed to his mother. When Saru threatens him to tell the mother that he was scared of darkness he pleads to her to keep this secret in lieu of doing anything she wanted him to do. When Dhruva dies, Kamala’s filial affection seems to have dried up. She does not want his daughter, Saru, alive. She gives vent to her frustration telling Saru, “Why are you alive when he is dead?”(20) Madhav, another character in the novel, resents his mother’s claim on him as the eldest child but it does not evoke hostility as he is a son. When he receives a telegram from his mother, he rushes home to see her but he does not address his mother’s concern by going to Bombay to look for Satish as it involved missing his examinations and spoiling his life.

Other Ajji in *That Long Silence* is described by Jaya as a “terrible mother”(45) as her influence upon her children is disastrous. Her orthodox and conservative attitude hinders her children’s growth and evolution and her children lived their lives reacting against her. She thwarted the ambition of her son, Chandumama, to do his FRCS. Her action turned him into a “dull, small town doctor”. He married a woman, had no feeling for her and filled his time with “shoddy affairs with all kinds of women.”(83) One of her sons had become a small time actor, flouting all familial expectations and proprieties and he received from Other Ajji only contempt for his act of rebellion. Jaya points out: “...one has to give credit for her(Other Ajji)steadfastness. Even after her son’s death, she never spoke of him, ‘except with anger and contempt’.”(43) Jaya’s own relationship with her children shows a distance in the parent-child relationship. They have been sent on picnic and they are not even aware of where their parents are. Jaya, being sensitive to people’s queries regarding the children, wants to get back soon. She is at pains to see that her mental state has
affected her son to such an extent that he never could have easy communication with his parents though the boy had established an easy and comfortable rapport with his father’s younger brother, Vasant who was himself a very relaxed person.

Madhu in *Small Remedies* is very closely attached with her only son, Adit. His birth after two years of their marriage had filled her life with such radiance that she feels like a devotee telling her God, “What can you give me, My Lord, I, who have everything?”(89) The experience of motherhood had absorbed her completely, so much so that she could not even relax when she went out for the evening walk with her husband. The child has fully appropriated her and her identity. She is known as Aditya’s mother. She waits for eight year old Adit through the violence ridden days in Bombay and searches for him on the crowded streets of the city even when her husband, Som, tries to convince her that Adit is dead—he was killed in a bus which was burnt down in a bomb blast following a riot caused by the repercussions of Babri Masjid demolition. She tries overcoming her trauma over the loss of her son but one question has preoccupied her since his death: “How does one live with the knowledge of a child’s death?”(155) The novel thus presents the case of a bad parenting-Madhu had already lost the child before his actual death because of her possessive attitude and constant hectoring. Even while she is grieving, she is analysing her possessive obsession with the child and how letting him go was problematic for her. Leaving him at home for an evening was an agony. She saw Aditya as an extension of her own being and failed to recognise his separateness or independent identity. She is possessive and she feels indispensible. She is also afraid to lose him to adulthood. Som had all along advised her to let him be more independent, not to tie him down: “Let him go, Madhu...Don’t hold him so close, let him go.”(187)

Manjari in *Moving On* is very much concerned for her son, Anand. When Anand was a child his eyes had followed his mother about when she was getting ready to go to work and how when she returned he along with his sister, Sachi, rested on her as if they had found what they had been searching for all day. She felt the gut-wrenching agony of leaving him at home or with strangers and going to work. During the days of hardship, Anand was the anchor of her life. She reflects: “Getting my joy from seeing Anand’s body put on weight, from seeing him grow, I survived and so did Anand.”(213) A grown up Anand shows proper concern for his mother. When he learns from B K about
the threat on his mother, he visits her at Bangalore. He is worried for her safety. He is always ready to talk to her. Manjari reflects:

On seeing me he puts away his book and glasses and pats the bed, inviting me to sit down and talk. This is the unusual that for a moment, I hesitate; he, however, is eager to talk and to my surprise, he speaks of Baba, who he says comes to his mind every time he attends an anatomy lecture. (210)

But some other mother-son relationships in the novel are not normal. Kamala was heartbroken when her son, Raja, married Rukku, a Tamil girl older than him, instead of the girl Kamala had chosen for him. But when Raja suffers an accident and is hospitalised with a leg fractured, she comes to the hospital to be by his side. But Raja, finds her irritating and Sachi tries her best to keep Kamala away from Raja. Manjari, the narrator, reflects: “She irritates Raja enormously. In fact his normal good nature and tolerance seem to have vanished, leaving behind a fretful, irritable man.” (310) She returns home with tears in her eyes telling Manjari, “If you and Sachi are here, I can go with an easy mind.” (311) Raja did not leave with his parents. He lived at Bangalore leaving them with a retarded daughter who was a burden. Saroja who is old and senile lives with her son, Venkat after her husband’s death. She is aggressive and demented turning all her hostility on Venkat and his wife, suspecting them of stealing her jewels, of manipulating her bank account. Abhay, unlike his sisters, Pushpa and Suman who lived in silence with their parents and escaped as soon as possible, clings to his mother, Mangal. He is living with her unemployed and unmarried.

Rani in *In the Country of Deceit* does not seem to be emotionally attached to her only son, Rohan. She is not only casual and uncaring but also unconcerned and dismissive to him. Devi notices the absence of love and intimacy in their mother-son relationship as she reflects:

He would leave their games and come and sit with us, not close to his mother, but his eyes fixed watchfully on her. Silent, afraid of being noticed, of being told, perhaps, to go and play. After a while he would come closer and stand by her, careful not to touch her, though. Sometimes she would suddenly pat his cheek and his face would take on a look of ecstacy, painful to watch. At other times she would say ‘Go and play, Rohan’ and call out Neha, standing at a distance,
waiting, it seemed, for this moment, ‘Neha, take him away’. And when Neha led him away, she would smile at her, a smile so radiant that I saw Neha blink. (30)

Devi’s sister, Savi, neglects her only son, Arjun because of her overindulgence with Charu, her daughter. When Arjun is down with pneumonia, she regrets that she should have taken his cough and fever more seriously. Sindhu asks her son, Gundu, to make a small independent place for her and Keshav, his father, with an attached kitchen when he would go for an alteration in the existing house. It hurts Gundu and he offers to move out of the house if his parents do not want to stay with him and his wife, Asha.

IV

Father-son relationship is also an aspect of filial relationship which is neither problematic like mother-daughter relationship nor harmonious like father-daughter relationship. It is a relationship of emotion and strain. In a father-son relationship a father always wants his son to succeed and supersede him. He helps him in finding new horizons and reaching for skies. In the success of his son, the father sees his own success, in his failure, his own failures. The son, on the other hand, can help his father in realizing his dreams and often he has to sacrifice his own aspirations to live his father’s dreams. The relationship works best for them if they help each other.

In Indian context a son is always dear to his father because he gives a sense of continuation by propagating the family lineage and performing the last rites of his parents. He is a life-long asset, so he must be courageous, hard working and disciplined. He turns to his father for encouragement, discipline, chastisement, and the occasional gruff words or expressions of approval as he turns to his mother for the hug and the cuddle. All these make the father-son relationship sensitive and it requires utmost care and concern for each other.

Shashi Deshpande’s *The Dark Holds No Terrors* does not deal with Father-son relationship directly as Dhruva, the only son, dies in his childhood. But Saru’s father’s relationship with Madhav is indicative of what
his relationship with a son may have been. When Saru who was discriminated against her brother in her childhood, sees her father’s easy and comfortable relationship with Madhav, she feels that if her brother, Dhruva, had survived and grown up, he would have enjoyed his father’s love as much as he had enjoyed his mother’s in his childhood and she may have been pushed further to the periphery. Madhav’s relationship with his own father is balanced. He is critical of his father’s obtuseness. But he respects the principles of hierarchy and does not consider it appropriate to intervene in his father’s handling of his younger brother, Satish, despite his mother’s insistence.

However, in *That Long Silence* the father-son relationship is neither harmonious nor balanced. Mohan resists his father. He has memories of his father’s irresponsibility—he could never make enough to support the family—and the humiliation that he felt when his education was paid by an old man as an act of charity. His father treated him in a rough manner when he had fallen ill. He has a harsh father and he holds him responsible for the kind of life he has to live. When he speaks about his father, emotions break through the surface. His father is not his role model. He constantly struggles to maintain his distance from the kind of life his father had led.

Gopal in *A Matter of Time* has an uncertain son-hood. He has been vexed about his father who is, in fact, the younger brother of his sister, Sudha’s father and who had married his widowed mother after the death of his first wife. He is the second husband of his mother. Their marriage was in conformity with the accepted practice among several tribes and castes in India as depicted in Rajender Singh Bedi’s *Ek Chadar Maili Si* in which the marriage takes place between the widow of the elder brother and her husband’s younger brother, not with their willingness but by social imposition. But Gopal begins to trace in it a betrayal to her first marriage and he wrote an article dealing with uncertain son-hood based on the story of Prince Hamlet, which invited the wrath of his students who abused and assaulted him because the Hamletian intervention is the recognition of sexuality which Indian cultural myths tend to gloss over. His sense of uncertain son-hood dislocates him and pushes his life into a groove of insecurity and tentativeness; distrustful of the future. Gopal is, in almost every respect, a man seeped in Indian tradition. Jasbir Jain makes an important observation in this context:

When Gopal finds out that his father is the younger brother of Sudha’s father—a ‘Lakshmana-like younger brother, keeping a
promise made to his elder brother’, he also realises that the comparison does not go to the full length. It did not work that way, for Lakshmana never looked at Sita’s face. The story that fits his imagination is the story of Hamlet\textit{(Time 42-43)}. Gopal gets caught between two kinds of cultural narratives as he looks for an explanation of his own parentage. (2003:228-229)

He is busy living out the guilt of his father. He once recalls his father in his dreams. The father makes gestures of affection and care. He recollects: “This father of my dreams smiles at me, we walk the streets together, he waits for me when I lag behind, he holds my hand when I’m tired, he looks at me affectionately.”(42)

Shashi Seshpande’s another important novel \textit{Moving On} presents the father-son relationship of four generations. Manjari, the protagonist, learns from her father’s dairy that her grandfather had a bitter relationship with his father. He had ventured out for school and college education, obtained B A, become a Gandhian, joined the national movement, gone to jail, disowned his Brahmin caste and family name to marry a Harijan girl of his choice ignoring his father’s wishes and threats. All these were enough for a reputed Brahman family. So his father disowned him. But he himself was a very loving and caring father to his son, Badri, Manjari’s father. He neither interfered in his affairs nor exercised his parental authority on him. He shared Badri’s ambition of getting into a medical college. He assured him that even if he died, there was enough money for him to complete his education. He showed his happiness openly when he got admission. But he became lonely after his retirement. He wanted to talk to Badri at length but his son did not listen to him. Whenever his son wanted to go elsewhere, he longed for him to stop. His son was always impatient to leave when he was with his father. But he served his ailing father well. He writes in his diary:

When my father fell ill, I knew it was my duty to look after him, my responsibility to care for him. But there was something more than duty and responsibility that urged me on; it was a kind of tug, so that I was never free of thoughts of him, I felt a positive ache in me at the thoughts of his weakness and increasing helplessness. (55)

After his death, Badri suffered from a sense of acute loss. He writes in his dairy, “Now after his death, in my hostel room where he had never
been, his absence became a huge dark shadow, a loud scream.” (14) He realises his father’s miseries only after he himself becomes a father. He writes: “Thoughts of my father and his rather joyless life came back to me when I became a father myself.” (14) And he regrets being indifferent and dismissive to his lonely father when he is himself bedridden waiting for death: “It had troubled me after his death and I was full of guilt at not having spent enough time with him. But it passed. And now it returns when I am at the end of my life.” (303)

The third generation father-son relationship between B K and his son, Raja is not well at least in the beginning. They could not get on with each other. Badri, the elder brother of B K calls their relationship “A classic father-son relationship.” (90) B K, constantly disapproved of everything Raja did. He regularly subjected his son to sarcasm and pompous lecturing. And Raja showed his sulking, rebellious face to his father. But later Raja became sympathetic towards his father and protective to him. He feels very bad when his mother nags at his father. He tells Manjari,

She nags at him all day...And she makes me the audience. I have to listen to her long list of complaints against Appa. She speaks in a loud voice, deliberately so that Appa will hear her. I know he is listening, I know he knows I’m listening...I can’t bear to see what she is doing to him. (91)

He feels hurt to see his father’s pathetic condition. He says, “When I see Appa, I get the feeling that he’s just waiting to die.” (95) B K’s attitude and behaviour to his son also changed after the death of his wife, Kamala. Manjari reflects at the change: “But it’s B K’s relationship with Raja that pleases me most. I remember the earlier acerbic, always critical B K, the sullen defiant Raja. Now the two men, father and son, are easier with each other, comfortable in each other’s company. (330) Shyam, Manjari’s husband, did not have a cordial relationship with his father. His father made him to pay rent for living in a room of his family house. He drove everyone crazy, asking for an account of every paisa spent, grudging his family everything except the bare necessities. This was one of the reasons Shyam had walked out. He says, “I refused to take his money, it was like becoming his slave.” (251)

The fourth generation father-son relationship between Raja and his son, Pavan is reminiscent of that between Badri and his father. Raja, a
single parent to Pavan, feels lonely and hankers for the company of his son. But his son is available only during the holidays, and even during the holidays, his being at home, does not make any difference to Raja. He tells Manjari about Pavan’s secretiveness: “He never let out anything. I have to literally squeeze it out of him—you know, like the last of the toothpaste.” (68)

Shashi Deshpande’s *In the Country of Deceit* presents two different kinds of father-son relationship. K N, Rani’s second husband, hated his father, a school teacher who had run away with a much younger colleague, abandoning his wife and two young sons. His mother had suffered great hardship and brought up her sons at her own. So K N resented his father so much that he had even changed his name—he had given up his father’s name and adopted the name of his mother’s village, Nevilur, as a surname. He never reconciled with his father who was now dead. But Ashok Chinappa’s relationship with his father was different. Ashok’s mother had died giving birth to a second child and his father, shattered by that, became so anxious about his surviving son and so protective that he had refused to let him join the Army, which had always been his dream. He had lost two years seeking a safe and sedentary job. He had resented his father’s second marriage at first but very soon he found that her step mother was the best thing that could have happened to his father and him—she had persuaded his father to let him try for the IPS.

Thus the study of filial relationship in the novels of Shashi Deshpande shows that filial relationship is not the same in the successive generations. The parent-child relationship in the old generation was parents’ dominance over the child—the parents were demanding and the children were yielding. But in the succeeding generations the children became more and more demanding and the parents either give in to their demands or gave up their children. Another trend that is quite visible in the younger generation is that the parents’ relationship with their children is gender neutral. The protagonists who are educated and sensitive and who rebel against their mothers do not differentiate between the upbringing and education of their sons and daughters. Rather some protagonists show their utmost love and concern for their daughters. Urmila in *The Binding Vine*, is so sad and disheartened at the loss of her one year old daughter, Anu that she forgets her son and does not care for him.

The mother-daughter relationship which covers a wide canvas is mostly unpleasant and is marked with conflict and bitterness.
According to Charu Chandra Mishra this woman to woman relationship is problematized across generations as the mother represents the patriarchy. He observes: “But surprisingly Shashi Deshpande chooses the mother to represent the patriarchal power as she is well aware of the Indian social phenomenon where patriarchy operates through women.”(2001:45) But for Jasbir Jain the mother-daughter relationship is perpetually under resistance and conflict because of many other reasons. She makes her point referring to The Dark Holds No Terrors and some novels of Shashi Deshpande: “In this novel(The Dark Holds No Terrors) as well as in A Matter of Time, The Binding Vine and Small Remedies the conventional idea of motherhood is subjected to scrutiny. Part of the problem arises with a mother’s love for a male child as in The Dark Holds No Terrors, and part in the conflict between the need to be independent and free vis-a-vis the totalising claims of motherhood. Also in some measure it comes to rest on the mother-daughter relationship, where domineering mothers destroy their daughters.”(2004:212) Jasbir Jain’s statement seems to be one sided as she holds the mothers responsible for their problematic relationship with their daughters. But the detailed study of mother-daughter relationship undertaken in this chapter shows that almost all the protagonists rebel against their mothers creating the problem. They rebel because they do not want to be like their mothers, but in the end they come to discover that despite their rebellion, they are merely expressions of their mothers’ personality. They only pass through a peculiar love-hate relationship between the rebellion and the discovery. In this respect Deshpande’ novels are close to Manju Kapur’s novels like Difficult Daughter, Home, A Married Woman and the immigrant in which the key concept is that a daughter in search of an identity is branded as a difficult daughter by the family and society. But Manju Kapur seems to be on the side of the mothers when she says:

Conflict between daughter and mother is inevitable, and I suppose I was a difficult daughter. The conflict carries on through generation to generation because mothers want their daughters to be safe to make the right choices, “right” in the sense that they are socially acceptable. My mother wanted me to be happily married; I want my daughters to have good jobs. (1999:10)

In the Indian context even today mothers do worry about their daughters and wish that their daughter would not be the victim of eve-teasing, violence, blackmailing, etc.; that their daughter would not choose
boyfriends and sleep with guys before marriage; and that their daughter would not go to film, club, restaurants with their friends and stay back or return home late at night. Obviously, the conflict between a restrictive mother and a progressive daughter is inevitable unless and until there is a balance between traditional demands and modern compulsions and a free flow of communication.

The father-son relationship, another same sex parent relationship, in the novels of Shashi Deshpande is problematic but less problematic than mother-daughter relationship because the sons do not have to struggle for their independent identity in the patriarchal set up. But the sons do resist their fathers and distance themselves from them as we see in That Long Silence, A Matter of Time, Moving On and In the Country of Deceit. It seems to suggest that the relationships tend to respond negatively to the authority exercised by the same sex parents and the inflated ego of the same sex children makes the free flow of communication very difficult, almost impossible. But the other sex parents (daughter-father and mother-son) appear to be more accessible and approachable and hence the relationship works well with them.

WORKS CITED AND REFERENCES


Dhawan, R K, Suman Bala and Subhas Chandra. Ed. 50 Years of Indian Writing in English.New Delhi: Prestige, 1999.


