Chapter 5

The Hostile (M)other
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The present chapter proposes to examine certain mother-daughter pairs who offer a sharp contrast to the amiable mother daughter relationships that we have observed in the previous chapter. Here the relations are shaped by open hatred and hostility between the mother and the daughter. Furthermore, unlike the previous instances, this form of relation involves the biological mothers and daughters. The distance between the two may get aggravated due to various reasons, the foremost reason being the mother's attempt to pass on patriarchal values to her daughter, against which the latter has no option but to revolt. Though the mother herself may have been a victim or target of the same forces, she nevertheless imbibes the value system of the patriarchal society so much so that she often seems to mimic its very voice. The daughter in her attempt to proclaim her independence fights against it.

Again, the mother daughter relationship also seems to turn sour when the mother herself tries to curb out a space of her own. Her intimate personal life in such cases often makes it impossible to develop any intimate bond with her daughter and she may go to any extent, including denial of her daughter altogether, if it happens to affect her personal-societal position in any way. The psychological insecurity on part of the mother and the daughter also tend to affect the relationship between the two. However diverse the cause may be behind turning a mother daughter relationship antagonistic, what mostly affects the relationship is the proximity between the two which leaves little personal space for either of them.
Section I: *Fasting, Feasting*

**Uma – MamaPapa:**

Anita Desai's *fin de sicle* novel, *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) veers round a daughter's quest for a space for her own. The novel brings into focus aspects of a traditional Indian household and how it obliterates the dreams and hopes of a daughter. Probably, nowhere amongst the works studied, the dominance of the patriarchal set up that works overtime to bind the women to a life of forced domesticity and drudgery is so prominent. Consequently, the mother daughter relationship as envisaged in the novel is typically symptomatic of the patriarchal ethos and its attendant insensibility.

The central figure of the novel is Uma, the eldest daughter of the family. She has two other siblings Aruna and Arun. It is as if her name itself sets her apart from them. Uma is the mother-goddess in the Hindu pantheon. She is variously known as Durga, Gouri, and Parvati. Married to Lord Siva, Uma's life is marked by extreme suffering and sacrifice. Like the mythical heroine, Uma in *Fasting, Feasting* is also an embodiment of self-sacrifice. Arun and Aruna are references to the rays and colours of the rising Sun respectively. Their names seem to suggest the limelight they enjoy as opposed to Uma. Even though all the special treatment is reserved for the son Arun, Aruna too is not as deprived as Uma. Aruna, the younger daughter in the family, with her charming looks and personality, raises the hope of a suitable marriage while there is widespread apprehension about the future of Uma. Virtually she
becomes a slave of the family and everyone from the authoritative Papa to the child Arun treats her with disdain while exploiting her labour.

The first time we meet Uma, she is busy packing a parcel for her brother Arun who is in a US university. A volley of commands from her father is what she has to confront. The irony of the situation is poignant here, the eldest of the three children labouring for the youngest one. This has been a pattern all through her life. She has to deal with the orders of everyone in her family who, because of their social or intellectual superiority, tend to dominate over her. Her mother too is no exception to this.

Indeed, Mama in *Fasting, Feasting* has so much internalized the patriarchal voice that she loses her identity altogether. She is always remembered as a tag to her husband. MamaPapa or PapaMama become the favourite reference points of the children.

MAMAANDPAPA. MamaPapa. PapaMama. It was hard to believe they had ever had separate existences, that they had been separate entities and not MamaPapa in one breath (Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* 5).

In fact, she is so dominated and controlled by her husband that her occasional forays into the neighbours' houses to play a game of rummy – her only private joy – is to be done surreptitiously. Even though, "she did not quite lift her sari to her knees and jump over the hedge," she "somehow gave the impression of doing so" (Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* 7). Her girlish behaviour during these moments suggests the free spirit still dwelling within her. But once she is back
into her own yard, her manner becomes one of "guarded restraint, censure and a tired decorum" (Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* 7). Her identification with her husband is so complete that she has lost her own ability to think for herself. In every matter they speak in the same voice. If one has reprimanded a child for some reason there is no point complaining as the other would also speak the same words. It is not that there is no disagreement between the two. And, though during the regular arguments concerning dinner it is Mama who always has an edge over Papa, in matters far more serious it is the latter's opinion that prevails. Thus Mama is made to bear a child when she is quite aged against her wish.

Mama was frantic to have it terminated. She had never been more ill, and would go through hellfire, she wept, just to stop the nausea that tormented her. But Papa set his jaws. They had two daughters, yes, quite grown-up as anyone could see, but there was no son. Would any man give up the chance of a son? (Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* 16).

If the birth of a son is a source of comfort for Papa, it means the loss of whatever freedom Uma ever enjoyed. Mama returns exhausted after Arun's birth and the duty of looking after the child's needs falls upon Uma. She is expected to act as the surrogate mother of Arun. To ensure that she can carry on the job without any hindrance Mama Papa decides not to send her to school any more. It comes as a shock to Uma. Of all the places it is the school that Uma likes most. Though her performance as a student leaves much to be
desired yet her fondness for school seems to remain undiminished. We perceive it is the only place where she can be comparatively free. Now this freedom is being snatched away from her and she is being burdened with the caring of the baby. Mama tries to placate her by saying that she would not have to study and would enjoy her stay at home and promising her that she would be married soon. But when she finds Uma still glum, she uses the usual motherly trick of pleading for help. "I need your help, beti," she coaxed, her voice sweet with pleading" (Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* 22).

Uma's case seems to be that of a typical daughter in a traditional Indian family. Her education is dispensed with, as is her childhood. Considered fit for menial labour only, she is forced to confine herself into looking after the home and hearth. Throughout the novel people passing commands over Uma becomes a motif that seems to unite the plot.

'E, Uma!'

Uma comes to the door where she stands fretting. 'Why are you shouting?'

'Go and tell cook –'

'But you told me to do up the parcel so it's ready when Justice Dutt's son comes to take it. I'm tying it up now.'

'Yes, yes, yes, make up the parcel – must be ready, must be ready when Justice Dutt's son comes...' (Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* 4).

Again Uma is to carry on all the household chores:
Rousing herself, Mama called, 'Uma! Uma! Tell cook to bring Papa his lemonade!'

Uma ran (Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* 9).

When his father has his meal the stream of orders follows Uma:

'UMA, pass your father the fruit.' (Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* 23).

The series of directives clearly marks Uma's position in the family. She is hardly any better than the servants in the household. Indeed, that she is considered a substitute of the ayah becomes clear when the latter's duty is relegated to her. When Uma protests, her mother retorts, "You know we can't leave the baby to the servant, (h)e needs proper attention" (Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* 30). Desperate to escape the role she is assigned, Uma flees to her school hoping to seek refuge with Mother Agnes. Uma promises to work very hard and pass next time but the Mother can offer no solace. She simply tells Uma, "Girls have to learn these things too," (Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* 28) referring to her homely duties. Uma loses the proverbial last straw and has to suffer the ignominy of being packed in the school-van and returned home.

On returning home Uma has to put up with her mother's fury. Mama is devastated by her daughter's behaviour and blatantly puts the onus of Uma's exodus on her convent education - "See what these nuns do, (w)hat ideas they fill in the girls' heads! I always said don't send them to a convent school. Keep them at home, I said - but who listened? And now –I" (Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* 29). Mama's reaction to the situation here is typical of an Indian
mother. She is held responsible for her daughter's behaviour. She has to ensure that her daughter conforms to the patriarchal norms and any misdemeanour on the daughter's part is taken to be a failure of the mother. In this particular case, Uma by seeking refuge at the school against a family decision has put the family into embarrassment. Mama instantly feels herself accountable for her daughter's misconduct. In blaming the nuns for what they teach and holding Papa responsible for sending her children to the convent in the first place, Mama is trying to evade responsibility, which should not be hers in the first place. So both the mother and the daughter fall prey to the patriarchal trap – they are both expected to conform to their respective social norms, which in turn make them hostile to each other.

It is the special favour reserved for the son that highlights the degraded position of the daughter in an Indian family. Especially for one like Uma, who lacks both beauty and intellect, the late arrival of a brother, results in greater misery. The birth of Arun further cements the bond between Mama and Papa and Mama's sense of "an added air of achievement" (Desai, Fasting, Feasting 31) puts into perspective the daughter's position in the household. It is the birth of a son which seals the position of Mama as a wife and she basks in its glory. The craving for a son characterises the traditional Indian psyche to such an extent that a married woman is often not considered to have fulfilled her obligations till she gives birth to a son. Her duty being performed, Mama can now rest on the laurels; she continues to "deck herself in silks and jewellery and accompany Papa to the club, to dinner parties and weddings" (Desai,
Fasting, Feasting 31) in celebration of her new found status. Uma, Aruna and the ayah remain at home to look after the new bom.

Uma’s desire for independence makes her crave for moments when she can be alone. She treasures the days when Mama and Papa are out. In her own room she can enjoy her private collection of cards and bangles, a moment she ever yearns for. These private moments are the only sources of joy left to her. One may feel how mundane her yearnings are, but that only goes to reflect the complete dullness in her life. Her desire to escape such a life haunts her every moment; and anything out of ordinary, out of the probing eyes of her parents has to be cherished. Such moments are however rare. The arrival of family relations generally colours up Uma’s life a bit. It is interesting to note that the visitors with whom Uma feels most comfortable are the ones least admired by her family. In fact, she enjoys a bond with those who fall into the bracket of family outcastes much like her. Mira-masi and Ramu, her cousin, belong to this group.

It is Uma’s desire for a world beyond her own that makes her seek these visitors. Mira masi’s ritualistic prayers attract her. It is a world which strikes her inner chord. “Then Uma, with her ears and even her fingertips tingling, felt that here was someone who could pierce through the dreary outer world to an inner world, tantalising in its colour and romance. If only it could replace this, Uma thought hungrily” (Desai, Fasting, Feasting 40). The same desire of replacing the world she inhabits with a different one afflicts her when she is with her cousin Ramu.
The very arrival of Ramu marks a change in her life pattern. Once her cousin steps in she volunteers to carry the bag for him. But the chivalry that Ramu shows is unknown to Uma.

‘No, no,’ he says, slapping her hand away. ‘Ladies cannot carry bags for gents.’

She titters with pleasure: ladies! Gents! (Desai, Fasting, Feasting 46).

All through her life Uma has suffered because of her womanhood. Ramu opens up a new perspective for her. For the first time in her life she is shown deference for being a woman.

Ramu also teaches Uma to be independent. He suggests taking her out for dinner. Papa and Mama are shell-shocked. But Ramu is insistent and Uma shows her interest.

‘There’s Kwality’s!’ Uma cries suddenly, making her parents turn their faces from Ramu to her without altering their thunderstruck expressions: what could she be thinking of, suggesting dinner in a restaurant? She has never been to one in her life; how can she think of starting now when her hair is already grey (Desai, Fasting, Feasting 49).

At the restaurant Ramu makes Uma enjoy every moment. Uma has her first drink, her first dance. It is all so funny to her. When it is quite late they manage to stumble home. Uma, full of spirit, narrates to her mother about her experiences in the evening. She is too flabbergasted to find her daughter
behaving in such a fashion. Mama can only manage a quick reproach for her erring daughter.

Ramu's arrival opens a new phase in Uma's relationship with her parents. She has been always a dominated child who has endured her fate silently. She has often thrown little tantrums in protest, made a little bit of fuss but never has she dared to defy her parents outright. However, from Ramu she learns defiance, so uncharacteristic of her. She does not turn into a rebel; but she at least learns to voice her preferences, to say what she likes and to take a few tentative steps to make her desire come true.

Uma has another stint of happiness, when she goes to the ashram in company of Mira-masi. Her parents would not have allowed her to stay out of home for so long but for a casual concern expressed by Mama about Mira-masi's ailing health. Once Uma is in the ashram she enjoys every moment out there. It comes as an escape from the daily drudgery which seems to have been a part of her life for so long. But what gives greater pleasure to Uma is the sense of freedom that she enjoys at the ashram. With Mira-masi she does not need to be bothered about the constant vigil that her parents tend to keep on her. Mira-masi herself being devoted to the Lord is the least likely to bother about worldly matters. Naturally, Uma is left to her delicious taste of freedom.

Uma was perfectly happy not to be noticed. She had never been more unsupervised or happier in her life (Desai, Fasting, Feasting 57) [Emphasis added].
However, Uma cannot stay in the ashram for long. Frantic that their daughter has not returned for more than a month MamaPapa bury their hatchet with Ramu and send him to fetch their daughter back home. Ramu is able to somehow persuade Uma to join him on his way back on the rickshaw. But Uma hardly realises what her cousin is at. Only when the cycle-rickshaw crosses the ashram gate does Uma apprehend that she is set for home. She is startled and almost jumps from her seat.

The carefree, 'unrestrained' days in the ashram are the most cherished in Uma's life. However, in her daily life she is subjected to every possible restraint. This restriction on the female child is a patriarchal demand. Ironically the mother too volunteers to this patriarchal hegemony, which leads to a strained relationship between the mother and her daughter.

A new phase in the mother-daughter relationship begins once the question of Uma's marriage is raised. She proves extremely difficult to be married off as none of the grooms in question seems to like her. Coupled with this is the ignominy of one of them asking for her sister Aruna's hand. It is a shame not only for Uma but for her mother as well. Mama having prepared her daughter all through her life for the moment, when a prospective bridegroom with a good family lineage and a bright career to show off would choose Uma as his would-be wife, is devastated at this ignominy. She hardly listens to Mrs. Joshi who has brought in this unfortunate bit of news and shouts without caring for Uma's sentiments.
... but at once Mama gave a scream: ‘Aruna? Aruna? He asked for her?’ and it was no use Mrs Joshi clapping her hand over her mouth and rolling her eyes towards Uma (Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* 78).

Marriage is considered to be the be all and end all of a woman’s life in the traditional Indian thought pattern. The parents of a daughter are therefore much obliged to marry off their daughter. It becomes a religious obligation of the parents to find a ‘suitable boy’ for their daughter. Often, Indian marriages involve the payment of a large dowry by the bride’s family. This obsession on a girl’s marriage diminishes her social position to a great extent as she is regarded as a burden to her family. In the case of Uma the parents are also obsessed with the idea of marrying her off. Their search for a groom continues. But as failures creep in Uma is blamed more and more for the failure. This reaches an acme when the family settles a marriage for her and pays a large part of the dowry only to be told that the marriage cannot take place. The loss of fortune and the shame associated with it vexes Uma’s Mama and she blames her daughter for this entire debacle. A greater misfortune strikes Uma when she is finally married to a man belonging to a much lower class than hers. But even payment of another round of dowry fails to win her a husband. It is discovered that the man is already married and has a child of his earlier wedlock. Uma is somehow rescued by Papa. She returns home disgraced only to be greeted with her mother’s scorns. The legendary Uma, in spite of all her suffering, has Lord Siva for her consort, one who is regarded as the ideal
life-partner for women according to Hindu mythology. Ironically, Uma in *Fasting, Feasting* only shares the suffering of her illustrious namesake; she cannot find any suitable match for herself.

Uma's desire for an identity finds a touching expression in her pleasure at being invited to a coffee party by Mrs. O'Henry. What pleases her most is that Mrs. O'Henry has invited her alone to the party not bothering to call upon her parents. This gives Uma an adult identity which allows her to communicate with other people on her own. She treasures the invitation so much that she does not want to tell her parents about it. But that is simply beyond question and Uma has to let them know about it. Her parents show their disapproval for such a party. However, Uma is defiant. She goes on arguing about the parties that Mama and Papa attend till her mother throws up the theory that Mrs. O'Henry is actually interested in converting Uma.

Uma's opportunity to shape her own unique identity occurs when Dr. Dutt arrives with a proposal to appoint her as a caretaker of the new trainee nurses in an upcoming hospital. Uma, though nervous of the assignment at first, agrees to take it up. It fills her dream vision of having her own career, her own living – an idea she gets from their neighbour Mrs. Joshi's daughter. But her parents would not allow her to do such a job by any means. Probably they feel it detrimental to their social standing. Mama goes as far as to tell Dr. Dutt that she cannot spare Uma as she herself is ill and her daughter is the only one available to take care of her. Uma can discern through the lie. She is desperate to have her own life. She requests Dr. Dutt to force her parents to
allow her to join the job. She even goes on to expose her mother's untruth. However, her frantic attempts meet no success.

But it would be wrong to suppose Uma to be the most unlucky girl. There is one even more ill-fated than she is. Anamika\(^1\), Uma's cousin, the pride of the family, one who performs so well in her academic life that she wins a scholarship to study at Oxford University, suffers in a more horrible way than Uma. Though Anamika's success becomes the talking point of her parents she is not allowed to study further. Having played the role of a docile girl all her life Anamika is unable to be disloyal to her parents. They force her to marry because of their conventional outlook. They get hold of a groom who is considered a proper match for her -- an aged fellow, totally unconcerned about Anamika, absorbed in his own air of superiority. Anamika is unacceptable to the groom's family and she suffers because of it. She undergoes torture at the hands of her in-laws. She loses her child even after conceiving because of a violent beating. From that point onwards Anamika is of no use to her husband's family as it becomes clear that she can no longer be a mother.

It was said she could not bear more children. Now Anamika was flawed, she was damaged goods. She was no longer perfect. Would she be sent back to her family? Everyone waited to hear.

Uma said, 'I hope they will send her back. Then she will be home with Lila Aunty again, and happy.'

'You are so silly, Uma,' Mama snapped as she whacked at a mosquito on her foot with the small palm-leaf fan she was
‘How can she be happy if she is sent home? What will people say? What will they think?’ (Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* 71)

The difference in attitude between Uma and Mama is quite poignant here. The two generations speak in two different voices. Whereas the older generation is governed by social inhibitions, Uma the representative of the later generation is much more concerned about the individual. This points out to the role of patriarchal forces in shaping the mother-daughter relationship. The mother steeped in the patriarchal worldview herself becomes the voice of male hegemony.

Anamika has to pay the ultimate price for her parents' obstinacy. They value their family name more than their daughter. Anamika is killed. The in-laws report that she has committed suicide. Many believe she has been murdered. Her parents can now do nothing more than mourning their daughter's death. When they arrive at Uma's place to consecrate the ashes of their daughter to the holy river, Uma cannot stop herself asking, “The letter – the letter from Oxford – where is it? Did you – did you burn it?” (Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* 152). It may be the cruelest thing to ask at that particular moment but it bears out all the anger of the younger generation towards the older for their failure to understand their concern and the needless suffering they have to undergo because of the stubbornness shown by those belonging to the earlier age group.

The death of Anamika acts as a bridge between Uma and her mother. Mama, who has always been put into disgrace by her daughter – first by her
attempts to break away from the family norms and traditions and then by not getting successfully married – suddenly discovers how lucky she has been all through her life. The woman who once felt that it would be a disgrace if Anamika was sent home by her in-laws now finds out that her daughter is luckier in escaping the rigours of a false marriage. The duping of Uma in the name of marriage might have caused disgrace to her family but it has not cost her – her life. Mama recognises the flaw in her own way of thinking and at the moment of a terrible anguish she reaches out to her daughter for support.

Uma suddenly finds a hand clasping hers tightly. It is Mama’s. When Uma turns to look she sees Mama’s eyes are closed and there are tears on her cheeks. ‘Mama,’ she whispers, and squeezes the hand back, thinking, they are together still, they have the comfort of each other. Consolingly, she whispers, ‘I told cook to make puri-alu for breakfast and have it ready.’ Mama gives a sob and tightens her hold on Uma’s hand as though she too finds the puri-alu comforting; it is a bond (Desai, *Fasting, Feasting* 155-156).

The connection between the mother and the daughter is thus re-established. The puri-alu is symbolic of Uma’s acceptance of a world, a world of her Mama. It is a world she has always been associated with and has forever resented. Now she can again connect to her Mama in this world. Mama too has learnt to accept her daughter as she is. Her apparent failure as a ‘daughter’ no longer stands as a hindrance between the two. One may assume that this unfolds an
era of mutual recognition and understanding between the mother and the
daughter after they have left all their misapprehensions in the back-seat.

Section II: Small Remedies

Munni – Savitribai:

*Small Remedies* (2000) by Shashi Deshpande is a study of the human
psyche in its various hues and minute details. The novel starts with Madhu’s
attempt to cope with the death of her son, Adit, in a terrorist attack. Her friends
pack her off to a small town, Bhabanipur, ostensibly on the purpose of writing
a biography of a famous singer, Savitribai Indorekar, but actually to survive
through the shock of her son’s death. However, this exploration into another
life will eventually enrich her own life as well. On her way to unearthing of
Savitribai’s life Madhu must stumble upon the former’s relationship with her
daughter, Munni, which stands in apparent contrast to that of the relationship
between Madhu and her son, Adit. Whereas Madhu cannot let her dead son
go, Savitribai does not even acknowledge the presence of her daughter in her
life – a daughter who too, like Adit, was a victim of bomb blast. Nevertheless,
Savitribai’s relationship to her daughter is not a straightforward one. Though
the relationship is characterised by mutual hatred and denial, it is far too
complex to be expressed in one-dimensional terms.

Madhu’s attempt to reconstruct the life of Savitribai centres on
Savitribai’s relationship with her daughter. However, in her attempt to
reconstruct the life of the musical maestro Madhu also, unwittingly though,
plays the role of the daughter. She is in search of the literary/cultural mother and her attempt in capturing the life of the mother opens up the possibility of the development of another mother daughter relationship.

Madhu, during her childhood days, was a next door neighbour of Savitribai at Neemgaon. Immediately, she embarked on a friendship with Savitribai’s daughter, Munni. It is in connection to Munni that Madhu can relate to Savitribai, who because of her rendezvous with music remained a distant figure. Madhu must therefore, begin to write Bai’s biography by relating her to her daughter, Munni. Even though the Bai abandons her daughter altogether and refuses to acknowledge her existence, Madhu finds it impossible to construct a life rejecting the very basis of her connection to Bai. Naturally, constructing the life-story of Bai becomes for Madhu simultaneously a quest to discover Munni and her relationship with her mother as well.

Munni’s first words to Madhu mark her denial of her parental identity: “My name is Meenakshi”, (Deshpande, Small Remedies 29) she volunteers even though the latter has not actually asked for her name. In spite of her father Ghulam Saab adoring her, she does not accept him. Munni goes on denying him to be her father and accuses him of being savage to her once she is inside home.

‘You don’t know,’ Munni says to me, contemptuous of my ignorance, ‘you don’t know anything. He’s different outside the house. When there are people around he pretends. But at home...’ (Deshpande, Small Remedies 65).
She even goes so far as to put forward a fictitious father of hers, one Sadashivrao, who lives in Pune. About her mother she remains silent. The children around taunt her as her family is not a conventional one. They go on interrogating her about her name, her father, her mother’s behaviour and the like with all the cruelty they have in their arsenal. Munni gets desperate from their savage attacks while trying to evade the intriguing queries with a sharp “I don’t know, I don’t know, I don’t know” (Deshpande, *Small Remedies* 35). The evasion of Munni is an act in self-defence. The unconventional set up of her life – where her parents belong to two different religious backgrounds, are not married to each other, and where her mother performs a role not deemed fit for a proper housewife – makes Munni vulnerable. The rejection of her parents and imagining a fictitious father figure is her way of gaining social respectability through the process of myth making.

However, the rejection is not one-dimensional. Savitribai, the mother, also refuses to acknowledge her daughter. To Madhu, the friend of Munni and now the biographer of Savitribai, this is an enigma she finds baffling:

To me, she was Munni’s mother. I knew her as Munni’s mother…. But she hasn’t spoken of Munni, not once. She has not identified me, either, as Munni’s friend, or as the daughter of my father, her doctor and her admirer. I find it strange

(Deshpande, *Small Remedies* 29).

Bai’s failure to be a ‘proper’ mother might have irked her daughter against her. The rejection of the mother by the daughter to some extent is part of every
mother-daughter relationship. Munni's case is extraordinary simply because of the length she goes in rejecting her mother. What is perplexing is Savitribai's discarding of her daughter. The question that arises is why one should discard her daughter even if she fails to be a 'perfect' mother.

Again, Munni's hatred for her mother is more than obvious from her very childhood. The day entire Neemgaon goes to witness the performance of Savitribai at the inauguration ceremony of the local radio station, Munni is probably the one who stays out. Her withdrawal from the ceremony is a deliberate one. When asked why she preferred to keep away from the function she says emphatically, "I hate music, I simply hate it" (Deshpande, Small Remedies 135), a denial which in fact is only an extension of her hatred for her mother. Munni's love for film songs is well known to her friend, Madhu. However, when Madhu's father an admirer of Savitribai, hears a jingle from Munni and praises her voice as being worthy of Savitribai's daughter she stops singing. No amount of coaxing is enough to make her sing in front of the man who identifies her with her mother. Her interest in music makes Munni take part in the school concert. She takes the centre of honour as she sits facing the audience, playing the jaltarang. She enjoys her performance as she daintily taps on the water-filled china bowls with a serious intent. However, unlike the other performers, who perform specially for their parents assembled there, Munni has no special guest. Savitribai is too distant a mother to indulge in her daughter's fantasies and fancies. Munni's euphoria is her own. Her
mother is no part of it, nor would she like her mother to intervene or participate in her life.

The lack of motherly love in Munni's life gives rise to her obsession for films. What she lacks in her real life, she desperately tries to substitute with that of reel life.

I learned about love from Munni, that great lover of movies; she gets both the word and the idea of love from them. Munni sees all the movies that come to our two theatres in Neemgaon. As soon as the posters go up on the trees and lamp posts, her excitement begins. She stands before the posters, gazing at them in rapt attention, her face taking on a glazed look, planning I know, to see the movie as soon as possible (Deshpande, Small Remedies 177-178).

This incursion into the world of love is Munni's defence against the loveless world that she lives in. The adventures into the fantasies of the movie help her to remain sane; so she fantasises the world where love is the promised destination.

Each time Munni sees a movie, she tells me the entire story. We have long sessions during which she narrates the story to me. It's always, I gather, about love. 'Pram' she calls it (Deshpande, Small Remedies 179).

The desperate attempt on Munni's part to seek love outside her home at once makes her an adult with a mind of her own and completes her rejection of her
mother. "Love is an adult emotion" (Deshpande, Small Remedies 179). And if it is so Munni learns the vagaries of the emotion even when she is totally immature; this is evident from her juvenile enquiry about what people ‘do’ without their clothes or her interest in the mistress that Madhu’s father often visits. The social illegitimacy of her parents’ relationship hurts her; she can think of it only as a sacrilege and fails to look deeper and appreciate their compulsions. This lack of comprehension and understanding about her parents makes Munni give them up totally. She thinks that if she has to look for love it must be somewhere outside her home; it must be an affair where her mother and her father can only fit into the stereotype of ‘enemies’.

Munni’s feeling of animosity towards her mother reaches such an extreme degree that she begins to despise every admirer of her mother. The radio Station Director of Neemgaon was supposed to be behind the meteoric rise of Savitribai as he helped her with openings on the radio, a help she could hardly do without. But because of their closeness Munni begins to hate the man. Once on their way to school the man offers Munni and Madhu a lift. Madhu, too happy with the offer, immediately jumps on to the car but Munni is not to accept any favour that comes from a friend of her mother. She keeps on walking in spite of repeated requests so that the bewildered Station Director is left with only one co-passenger instead of the two he had bargained for.

This desire to distance herself from her mother continues even after Munni grows out of her childhood. Once on a crowded bus Madhu chances to sit beside Munni. The moment her childhood friend turns to her she recognises
her. She even reads the glimmer of recognition on Munni’s eyes. However, no communication is possible as Munni, weary of her identity as Savitribai’s daughter, is in no mood to connect to a part of her life that would compel her to link to her mother once again.

‘You’re Munni,’ I said abruptly, startled into recognition.

She looked at me, I could swear there was recognition there, before the face became blank and inscrutable.

‘My name is Shailaja – Shailaja Joshi.’

The name was uttered slowly, clearly, her hand going to her mangalsutra as she spoke. Was it a habitual gesture? Or was she reassuring herself that she was indeed that Shailaja Joshi the black beads had transformed her into? A slight tremor in the hand seemed like a quiver of doubt. Am I Shailaja Joshi? Or Meenakshi Indorekar? Or Munni? (Deshpande, Small Remedies 76).

Munni seems to play the same game that she played in her childhood when she fiercely defended her identity as Meenakshi, as others tried to label her as Munni. On a retrospective view the early rejection of her identity at that point seems to have been a prelude to the final disclaimer – her severing of all connections with her parents.

The adult in Munni is pathetically akin to the child in her desperate effort to conceal her terror, her distress, and her grief under the façade of an apparent bravado. Her whole life has been shaped by a constant denial – the
denial of her relationship with her mother. What is interesting to note is that it is a similar denial that goes into the making of Bai's life. In spite of her stupendous success in her musical career there are facets of her private life which she is not ready open to anyone. Like her daughter she wears denial as a coat of armour, which once scratched would reveal her vulnerable self. The mutual antagonism between the two therefore only serves to foreground Savitribai's similarity to her daughter. Both of them lead a life of denial and it is a denial of the most intimate aspect of their life. This denial on their part is an outcome of their obsession with social respectability. Munni conceals her identity as she is afraid of social ostracism, a threat which she can hardly ignore with her less than ordinary ambitions in life. Bai on the other hand, on the pinnacle of glory is eager to cast away any stigma attached to her. She would like to be remembered by posterity as a musical wonder who lived a respectable life, unlike many of her contemporaries. Her struggle to make her mark on the map of Indian classical music has not only been a struggle with music but also a struggle against all conventions, all her religious beliefs. She does not talk about isolation in the social sphere as she had bartered it for her musical career. But once she has reached the heights there is fear in her eyes. She is also apprehensive that there is every chance that future generations would remember her not so much for her musical achievements as for scandals that make the daily briefing of the tabloids. This fear compels her to reject her love life altogether – she abandons her lover, even her daughter.
It occurs to me that like her daughter, Bai too is into denial. There’s no Munni in her life, no illegitimate child, no abandoned husband, no lover. In showing me her album, she’s presenting me with her own illusion of her life. A life of success and achievement. Nothing lacking; no unreconciled child, no dead daughter (Deshpande, *Small Remedies* 77-78).

Bai’s rejection of her daughter is complete. Her connection with her daughter is so disjointed that she never once utters her name. Even the death of her daughter in the same riots in which Madhu lost her son Aditya does not make Savitribai to acknowledge her daughter. Madhu is perplexed by the degree and extent and intensity of hostility between the two.

Whatever it was between them, mother and daughter, Munni’s death should have changed things. Death disarms you, you can’t fight any more, you have to lay down you arms. This has not happened with Bai. Her hostility continues. What else does her silence indicate but this? She is still the same Bai I saw as a child, walking on without a backward look at the child hovering in the shadows, the child who was waiting, it seems to me now, for a word from her mother, a glance. Any kind of recognition of her presence. A recognition which she is still being denied (Deshpande, *Small Remedies* 169).

The reason behind this hostility is not quite easy to explain. Obviously, one may put the onus on Bai’s search for respectability. One may note that Bai
harps on her Brahmin origin when she speaks to Madhu. Again it is her in-law’s home that she is nostalgic about, particularly about her father-in-law. But she hardly mentions about her maternal place. Even the death of her mother is glossed over.

Very casually she mentions a stepmother – my second mother, she calls her. But there is no mention of her mother’s death. Surely, a mother’s death is a momentous event in a child’s life? If it doesn’t register as significant at the time, doesn’t it become so later? I’m surprised that Bai bypasses this death entirely (Deshpande, *Small Remedies* 62).

Bai’s denial of her maternal lineage, including her mother may be read as a submission to the patriarchal order which demands a woman’s total subservience to her in-laws, once she is married. Bai thus emerges as an enigmatic figure, who breaks the traditions to the utmost and yet prefers to be viewed and judged within the parameters of the established framework. In doing so she actually wants to project the image of a traditional Brahmin wife, who despite her unconventional life sticks to the prescribed customs. Therefore, in spite of leaving her husband, her one year old child, and severing all connections with her in-laws, she desperately clutches on to them to secure her respectability. She wants to put forward her image as a woman, who – despite her misadventures for her unquenchable passion for music – remains the loyal Brahmin housewife at the core. This desire of hers to portray herself in favourable light compels her to reject her lover and her daughter
born out of the lovelock. The question that one must find an answer to, even if 
one strives for respectability as Savitribai does, that can a mother reject her 
daughter totally. Beauvoir seems to provide an answer to this. She states that:

If she (wife) is hostile to her husband, the situation is still 
different: she may devote herself fiercely to the child and 
withhold it from her husband or, on the contrary, hate it as being 
the offspring of the man she detests (Beauvoir 512).

The hatred for Ghulam Saab, though not pronounced, is very much there in 
the Bai’s mind. Though the man is responsible for her meteoric rise as an 
artist yet Bai holds him in revulsion. She cannot forget that it is because of 
Ghulam Saab, that she has lost her family, her respectability, her traditional 
religious heritage. A sense of irrecoverable loss gets translated into hatred for 
the man whom she holds responsible for the loss. And the daughter born out 
of this relationship is also hated because she epitomises the consummation of 
the affair, and seals the ‘scarlet letter’ of her guilt on her for ever. Munni 
becomes a hindrance to her mother’s march towards glory; though she is 
regarded among the greatest of the artists, her moral bearing can be 
questioned. Bai is torn and severed by this ambivalence within her and the 
conflicting pulls of social inhibitions and personal ambitions. Eventually this 
leads to obliteration of her daughter altogether.

The similarities between the mother and the daughter are obvious. 
Though Bai and Munni come to hate each other so much so that they deny the 
very existence of each other, there are traits in their behaviour which mark
them as 'double' or 'mirroring' each other. They share the same haughtiness, where they alone seem to be important. Even before her interview starts, Savitribai makes it clear to Madhu that the interview must be conducted on her terms and what is to be written must conform to the story that the Bai would like the world to know. Munni too is quite adamant and snooty in her behaviour. She misbehaves with Babu as he is a servant, ridicules Madhu for her boy-like name and has an overbearing, insolent, all-knowing attitude. Again, both the mother and daughter trade into the memories of the past and toy with it by 'memory making'. Bai proudly displays her achievements by exhibiting her album which displays only the high points of her career, and her association with the people who matter. Like her Munni too boasts of her glorious days, of her past life in Pune and never conceals her disdain for her life at Neemgaon.

It seems interesting that both Munni and Bai are after the same pursuit – respectability. The estrangement between the two is a result of the same quest. They both reject each other though – and perhaps because – they are connected by the same motive.

But Munni wanted respectability. And therefore she rejected everything associated with her mother – music, genius, ambition, freedom. Was it Munni who denied her mother then, Munni who turned her back on her mother? I am confused. It's like turning the hourglass over; it's the same sand, but now running the other way (Deshpande, Small Remedies 224-225) [Emphasis added].
However, there can be no doubt on this account. Munni's revenge was savage and total. She rejected her mother altogether. The girl, who feared the repeated queries of friends and acquaintances, succumbs to the fear of social ostracism. It is no accident that she uses a social occasion to assert and underscore her complete separation from her mother.

...Hasina, searching for something, found Munni's wedding card and, knowing I would be interested, brought it to me. A showy red, frayed at the edges now, the letters in omate gilt, almost undecipherable – a card like many others, but different in one thing: the bride was identified only by her father and grandfather. The mother's name nowhere. I thought there was something cruel about it, about the rejection of Bai as a mother, this erasing of her from her daughter's life (Deshpande, Small Remedies 283).

Here the very 'absence' becomes eloquent with 'traces' of 'presence' in the Derridean sense. Leaving out her mother was a conscious decision on Munni's part. This incident reveals why Bai has put a full stop in her relationship with her daughter. In spite of all her achievements, Savitribai remains vulnerable in one aspect of her life, where she has been brutally defeated – her relationship with her daughter. In disowning her relationship with her daughter she actually tries to evade her susceptible self, trying desperately to cling to her unvanquished image.

Madhu wonders what it must feel like to reject one's own mother:
What is it like to deny your mother? I was motherless, but she is still with me, the woman who gave me birth, the woman of whom I know so little, except that she was fleet of limb, short of patience and tall in aspirations (Deshpande, Small Remedies 225).

But however hard Munni tries to deny her mother she has no escape. Even if in life her denial was complete in death she has to give way. The report regarding her death reads “Shailaja Joshi – only daughter of Savitribai Indorekar” (Deshpande, Small Remedies 225). The identity she resists all through her life is ironically thrust back upon her in death. However hard one tries there can be no escape from one’s mother. Madhu has her own doubts about Munni’s rejection.

...But did Munni herself ever regret her break from her mother once she saw the eminence she had reached? Or did she cling to her hatred and her anger, unable to let go of the emotions that had been the driving force of her life? (Deshpande, Small Remedies 225)

An answer to this issue must be uncertain for the dead has no reason to oblige the human query. But certainly Bai has not been able to obliterate her daughter from her consciousness in spite of all her endeavour. More importantly, she has not allowed this failure on her part to stifle her life in other directions. The path of life she has chosen is not ordinary; it has its own hazards and she has had to pay a heavy price for her unusual choice in a
patriarchal society. Nevertheless, she keeps on moving ahead in spite of the pains and sufferings she has to endure.

...Munni's rejection was the price Bai paid, Munni who yearned for the commonplace, the ordinary, and stifled everything that connected her to her parents. I know now that Munni is with Bai still – at the edge of her consciousness, maybe, but she is there. Bai put her grief away like my father did his after my mother's death, storing it in the cupboard with the cups she won, while he went on with his life. Bai lost her daughter, but her life moved on. Even today, sick, old, dying, childless, when everything seems to have ended for her, she's not wholly bereft (Deshpande, Small Remedies 284).

Uma and her mother in Fasting, Feasting, as well as Bai and her daughter in Small Remedies, represent the problematics of a relationship – potentially sustaining though – turned sour under the corrupting inhibitions of a patriarchal society whose modes have been internalised by an elder woman in Desai's novel and a young girl in Deshpande's work.

Section III: The God of Small Things

Ammu – Mammachi:

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things (1997) is a story of three generations of mothers and daughters. Mammachi belongs to the first generation. She has been a victim of the patriarchal social structure along with
her daughter Ammu. Married to the Imperial Entomologist, Pappachi; Mammachi was used to the bullies and regular beatings of her husband. Pappachi’s professional frustration finds an expression in the torture he perpetrates on his wife and daughter. The more painful aspect of this torment is Pappachi’s hideous double-faced attitude. Whereas he keeps a very respectable social posture by being honey-tongued to visitors, donating money to the orphanages and leprosy clinics, the “cold, calculating cruelty” (Roy, God of Small Things 181) of the schizophrenic maniac towards his wife and daughter left them dumbfounded.

Pappachi’s cruelty increased manifold with his retirement. His wife’s success in the locality as a pickle and jam maker made him envious of his wife’s vigour.

Pappachi, for his part, was having trouble coping with the ignominy of retirement. He was seventeen years older than Mammachi, and realized with a shock that he was an old man when his wife was still in her prime. (Roy, God of Small Things 47)

Mammachi finally escapes the physical torments when her son Chacko, arrives on a vacation from England and sees his father beating her. Chacko, physically stronger than his father, overwhelms him and gives a stern warning “I never want this to happen again” (Roy, God of Small Things 48). But what Mammachi earns is not freedom from her servility; she can only exchange her
master. Now it is her son to whom she must serve instead of her husband. And this she accepts without a grudge.

The day that Chacko prevented Pappachi from beating her..., Mammachi packed her wifely luggage and committed it to Chacko's care. From then onwards he became the repository of all her womanly feelings. Her Man, her only Love (Roy, God of Small Things 168).

Ammu too has been the recipient of the same brutality as her mother. Together with Mammachi she has spent many a night hiding in the garden, when Pappachi sent them out of the house. She too has witnessed her favourite gumboot being shredded to pieces mercilessly by Pappachi, just as Mammachi had to see her violin being thrown into the river. This sharing of the common fate, besides being mother and daughter, should have established a special bond between the two. But instead we see Mammachi reserving her worst contempt for her daughter. Mammachi has suffered immensely at the hands of the patriarchal forces. But the experience has not made her a rebel. She only barters one form of slavery for another; her slavery towards her husband is replaced by her unquestioning subservience to her son. She has indeed picked up the voice of patriarchy in her relationship with her children. She is supportive of her son and adores and pampers him in all possible ways. She even gives away her new found economic independence to her son who takes over her pickle and jam factory. The transformation of 'Sosha's Tender Mangoes' and 'Sosha's Banana Jam' into 'Paradise Pickles and Preserves'
has been a loss which Mammachi fails to comprehend. She is even supportive of Chacko’s view about the family property: “What’s yours is mine and what’s mine is also mine” (Roy, *God of Small Things* 57). Her attitude towards her daughter, Ammu, could not be more contrasting.

Ammu’s marriage to a Bengali manager of a tea-estate is not approved by the family presumably because it was an inter-caste, inter-community marriage. However, Ammu’s prompt decision to marry the first man who proposes to her comes out of sheer desperation more than anything else. She is not allowed to study as it means ‘unnecessary’ expense in Pappachi’s account books. She is not even given to marriage as her father does not have the dowry to buy a groom. Hence, she is practically left with no other option. When she returns home unwelcome after her failed marriage with her twin children in tow she does not receive any support from any quarter. Even her mother is not favourable to her homecoming. The immensity of this neglect can be comprehended when Mammachi’s approving gesture towards her son’s homecoming is considered. It is important to note that like Ammu, Chacko too arrives devastated from a failed marriage which is also inter-caste and inter-community in nature. Chacko also marries away from home, the first woman with whom he develops a friendly relation. He does not even bother to let his family know about his marriage. And yet Mammachi receives him home with all the ambience and adoration possible.

Mammachi’s special favour for her son at the cost of her daughter does not end here. She embodies the voice of patriarchy and succumbs to the
notion that what may be allowed to a male member in the family should be a taboo for the females. This behaviour of hers goes a long way in shaping the tragedy. Her perception of sexual promiscuity in relation to her son and daughter is obviously conditioned by sexist views. When Chacko is found to be involved in profligacy with the female workers of her factory, many of whom are ‘untouchables’, she dismisses it simply as “Man’s Needs” (Roy, *God of Small Things* 168). She is indeed so considerate about his ‘Needs’ that she builds a separate entrance “so that the objects of his ‘Needs’ wouldn’t have to go traipsing through the house” (Roy, *God of Small Things* 169). She even secretly goes about paying these women to buy their silence.

On the other hand, Mammachi’s reaction presents a blatant contrast to Ammu’s ‘needs’. Once she finds her daughter being involved in a sexual liaison with a Paravan, Velutha, Mammachi gets furious. Her very considerate self, which can understand the nuances of ‘Man’s Needs’, does not operate to feel her daughter’s ‘needs’, her emptiness, frustration, longing. Aided and abetted by Baby Kochamma she gives vent to the full fury within her. The anger is now directed to her daughter who, she believes, has ruined the family reputation for ever.

Mammachi’s rage at the old one-eyed Paravan standing in the rain, drunk, dribbling and covered in mud was redirected into a cold contempt for her daughter and what she had done. She thought of her naked, coupling in the mud with a man who was nothing but a filthy *coolie*. She imagined it in vivid detail: a
Paravan's coarse black hand on her daughter's breast. His mouth on hers. His black hips jerking between her parted legs. The sound of their breathing. His particular Paravan smell. Like animals, Mammachi thought and nearly vomited. Like a dog with a bitch on heat. Her tolerance of 'Men's Needs' as far her son was concerned, became the fuel for her unmanageable fury at her daughter. She had defiled generations of breeding (The Little Blessed One, blessed personally by the Patriarch of Antioch, an Imperial Entomologist, a Rhodes Scholar from Oxford) and brought the family to its knees. For generations to come, for ever now, people would point at them at weddings and funerals. At baptisms and birthday parties. They'd nudge and whisper. It was all finished now.

Mammachi lost control (Roy, God of Small Things 257-258).

Mammachi's schismatic attitude vis-à-vis her son and daughter is a common phenomenon in a patriarchal set up. Being born and brought up in an atmosphere where sons are valued more than daughters, where they are bestowed with every property, where they are believed to be the carriers of the family lineage, the mothers tend to favour sons in no uncertain terms. They are unashamedly partial and unfair to their sons and daughters respectively. Mammachi is no exception to this general rule and it shapes and formulates her relationship with her daughter Ammu. However, what is remarkable is not
her distinct favouritism for Chacko, but her total disregard for her daughter. There is significantly no communication between Mammachi and Ammu. Mammachi does not even shower her abuses on her. She simply ignores her daughter as if she is not existent at all. This indifference engulfs her grandchildren as well. In India a special relation between the grandchildren and their grandpa and grandma is most common. Mammachi too shows a very special fondness for Chacko's daughter Sophie Mol, a child she hardly knows. But Rahel and Estha seem to be outside the purview of her world altogether. Like Ammu they are not only neglected but are totally ignored. This can be contrasted to her affection for her other granddaughter displayed openly in the part she plays in the little family drama 'Welcome Home, Our Sophie Mol'. She goes on reading Sophie Mol's face like a cheque and in spite of her blurred vision discovers Pappachi's nose in her. She also welcomes her with a melody that she plays especially for her. But to the children who really crave for attention, she hardly does display any liking for them. This dislike is an outcome of her hatred for her daughter, whom she believes to have tarnished the family honour first by marrying a man of different religion and community and then by getting divorced. In this sense she shares the viewpoint of Baby Kochamma, who takes every opportunity to make it clear to Ammu and her two children that they are parasites in the household who have no locus standi. Hers is only a much crueller version of the hatred shared by the two old women of the household for whereas Baby Kochamma at least makes no
pretence of her feelings; Mammachi even refuses to acknowledge the presence of Ammu and her twins.

Even Margaret seems to score more favourably in Mammachi's view. It is not that she has any sympathy for a woman who has divorced her son and inflicted pain upon him. She would not have liked her even if she had not separated from her son. But unlike Ammu she cannot ignore her son's ex-wife. Now that Margaret has arrived Mammachi is very concerned about whether she is going to start a sexual relationship with Chacko again. She tries to buy Margaret's sexuality just as she purchases the factory women's sexual favours for her son. Mammachi goes on slipping money into the dresses that Margaret leaves for washing. Though she is well aware that this money would actually go into the hands of the washer man, she does it deliberately to treat her ex-daughter-in-law as a whore. This complex feeling goes on to show the enormity of Mammachi's dependence on her son and her possible hatred for any daughter figure.

Section IV: The Binding Vine

Vanaa – Mandira:

The relation between Vanaa and her elder daughter Mandira in Shashi Deshpande's The Binding Vine (1993), is an interesting, though a non-detailed, case study of mother-daughter relationship. Their relationship points to the problematic nature of the bond between the mother and the daughter, especially if the latter is a child. One does not witness much development in
the nature of the relationship between the two, as Mandira is not mature enough to understand and accommodate the complicacies that the relationship poses. Even Vanaa seems to be somewhat at the sea when it comes to deal with Mandira and equally demonstrates her immaturity as her daughter does.

The problems between the two surface in little arguments over small matters. For example, when Mandira clumsily combs Urmila's hair and Vanaa wants her to stop, she retorts, "I'm not torturing, I'm doing a hair-style. And Urmiauntie lets me do it. Why do you come in the middle?" (Deshpande, Binding Vine 30). Or again seeing her mother laugh she makes it out to be against her own self: "No, she's laughing at me. You're always making fun of me. You're cruel. I'll never talk to you again, never, never in my life...." (Deshpande, Binding Vine 31). All these childish tantrums, though quite normal in any child, nevertheless points to a rift between the mother and the daughter. Mandira is by all means angry with her mother and Vanaa is at a loss to understand what causes her daughter to fuss so much.

The resentment of Mandira against her mother becomes clear when Pallavi falls ill and she has to manage all alone. Being nervous, she calls Urmila for help. When Vanaa arrives, she clearly shows her displeasure. This comes out of insecurity as she fails to handle the crisis. The target of the bitterness is, however, her mother. And later to Urmila she confesses her hatred for her mother.
'You know, Urmiauntie, when I grow up, I'm never going to leave my children to go to work.'

'What will you do?'

'Stay at home and look after them.'

'When they grow up, they'll go away and won't need you. What will you do then?'

'Then I'll go and work.'

'Who'll give you a job when you're that old?'

'I don't care. I'll never leave my children alone.'

(Deshpande, Binding Vine 72)

Vanaa too cannot cope with her daughter. She fears that Mandira hates her and hurts her deliberately. What she fears most is Mandira's constant demand that she should not be working:

'...Why are these kids so demanding, Urmí? Akka went to work, it was part of my life that my mother was a teacher. I never thought she wronged me by going out, I was proud of her. And I'd never have dared to talk to her the way this child talks to me. I remember once I was angry with Akka, I stopped speaking to her. She said nothing for a day, but the next day she took me into the bathroom and whacked me properly. Imagine me doing that to Mandira! I'd never dare. Urmí, why is it nobody thinks of blaming Harish? He's never around, but it's never his fault. If you
ask me, it's all Akka's fault. It's she who filled me up with ideas of a career...’ (Deshpande, *Binding Vine* 74-75).

Vanaa is equally vexed by Mandira's jealousy towards her sister Pallavi. As Pallavi is younger, she is cuddled more and this further stirs Mandira's grudge against her mother. Mandira, though intelligent and by no means a malevolent child, nevertheless is problematic for her mother. This arises from the sense of insecurity and the lack of communication. One may presume that this relationship will change its course once Mandira grows up and Vanaa learns to communicate more effectively with her daughter.

Mother-daughter relationship can be experienced in various hues, shades and patterns. Whereas in the previous chapter we tried to examine those relationships which stand out for their amiability, in this chapter our objective was to explore relationships where the mother and the daughter figures appear 'terrible' to each other. Very often a mother who has been exposed to oppression all through her life imbibes the patriarchal spirit to the utmost and goes on to become an extension of the same system that once subjugated her. She in turn tries to coerce her daughter into submission. This, coupled with the intensity of the bond between the two, often becomes so stifling that one has often no choice but to scuttle the relationship. However, this is not an easy choice. The nature of the relationship is such that the mother and the daughter become bound to each other at the physical, psychic and social levels. The inability to create a detachment in search of one's own
space leads to a hostile relationship. In extreme cases it takes the form of hatred for the very same person to whom one is normally most close.

It is interesting to note how the Indian women writers of the new era have tried to probe the problem in the Indian context, and to understand and arrive at the 'heart of the matter' through sympathetic insight, and without any inhibition. They are apparently not in search of the 'angel', nor of the 'monster' in the house but rather the real individuals and their relationships, which might be affected when the patriarchal myths are internalised by the women themselves.

Notes:

1. Anamika means one who has no name and therefore, by implication, has no identity of her own. In spite of her immense potentiality she has to suffer miserably, only because she conforms to the traditional value system which gives her no space of her own.

2. The mythological Savitri has been valorised for ages for her devotion to her husband, Satyaban, whom she rescued from the clutches of death. Savitribai in Small Remedies is compelled to betray her husband for her passion for music and yet cannot escape the idolised image of her mythical namesake. This prevents her from being true to her lover, Ghulam Saab, or for that matter even her daughter, Munni.