The Homecoming

Chapter IV

The Homecoming

The return of the female protagonist to the ancestral home is a metaphoric journey to the depths of the unconscious, a return to the past, the familial house representing the feminine semiotic world. The lingering memories enclosed within the walls of the house enable her to reconstruct the past, urging her to move on with a changed perspective of life. Hence the return to the ancestral house is a redemption journey, a pilgrimage to the great tradition of family in search of roots. For the woman, the ancestral home is not the arrival point. It rather paves the way for her to begin a new cycle, leading to a homecoming to her nuclear home. She passes through the ‘rites of passage’ in her quest to know herself. The past can be repressed but not obliterated. Hence this journey into her own self, allows the repressed thoughts of the unconscious to surface onto the conscious level, restoring mental health. It can be noted that it is the woman who has strong ties with her background and affection for her family house, the house having a mothering effect on them. Usha Bende explains the heroine’s homecoming in this way:

Despite the obvious tussles with the mother, the
daughters have an irresistible urge to return home: the Greek ‘nostros’: they go back in search of their mothers. Indu goes home after eleven years to find herself not only an inheritor of Akka’s property, but of her indomitable spirit also. Saru’s return after fifteen years is significant as it speaks of her urge to be forgiven for her rashness. (Bende 135)

The return to the Familial house is always alone, as in the case of Indu, Saru, Sumi, Madhu and Jiji, the house welcoming them to explore its dark mysterious depths, enabling them to re-identify their own selves by placing their relationship with their parents, others and their own selves in a better perspective. These women return as if by an inner call, though on the surface, it is the dissatisfaction in their nuclear homes which persuades them to return. The social construct of feminity exerts enormous psychological pressure on them through what Betty Friedan termed ‘the feminine mystique’ - the notion that the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfilment of her own feminity. The home with their husband and children fail to instil happiness because of this psychological pressure on them. Though not consciously aware of their predicament, they
look for reasons to get away from the ‘blissfully happy’ atmosphere of the nuclear home. It is this discontent which induces them to return to their ancestral home on some pretext or the other. The death of Akka, in RS makes Indu leave her husband Jayant and return to the house which she had hated. Sarita, in TDHT returns home, responding to Akka’s summons, to the house which she had promised never to come back, leaving her husband and two children. In AMT, Sumi comes to The Big House though it is due to Gopal’s desertion. Indu comes back to the collective existence of the familial house after ten years, immediately responding to the summons of Akka. She realizes that though she stayed away from the house for ten years, each day of those ten years, she woke up to the same sounds. She observes, “For a few seconds of each day I was back in this house” (RS 34). The memories of her relationship with other family members have something unique to offer and the motherless Indu realizes that she had been lucky to have got “affection from Old Uncle and loving care from Atya” (RS 13). After her return, the heightened sensory perceptions are almost like a spiritual experience leading to revision and insight. Indu experiences once again the enchantment of waking up in the morning to various sounds that somehow form a harmonious
whole. She captures the magic of the evening hours with renewed fervour when the first lamp was lit for the gods. She is able to languish in the feeling of ease, contentment and indolence embracing the whole house. It is the aura of warmth that makes it a home. Here she is able to regain an inner balance. S.P. Swain highlights how the homecoming process lies at the very base of Indu's self analysis:

The home she had discarded becomes the place of refuge, of solace and consolation. It is Akka's house that offers her ample opportunities to know herself. It is here that she is able to discover her roots as an independent woman, a daughter, a mother and a commercial writer. (Swain 95)

In TDHT, Sarita's return to her father reminds her of the poor ragged Sudama standing at the palace gates of Krishna and his queen Rukmini, which surprises her because her affluent life in the city was very much different from the image of Sudama. But at the moment the old house, which she had left promising never to return seemed to have much to offer her. In the quiet ambience of the house with her father and Madhav, she seemed to be looking for bits buried in her repressed memories. This delving deep into the recesses of her
unconscious, enables her to confront the terrors of the past. The death of Dhruva and the accusation made by her mother had left a split in her psyche. Her search for understanding of her mother is a search for her own feminine side and for the reunification of her split self. When Saru goes to her old room, she finds that she has been displaced by Madhav, symbolically taking Dhruva's place. She occupies the puja room where her mother used to pray for long hours after the death of Dhruva. This room becomes a womb-like place where she undergoes her regeneration. "The day seemed to stretch into infinity here, with nothing but mealtimes to break it up into bearable fragments" (TDHT 46). This is a time where weeks merge into months, and time itself gets lost in the space of the womb. In the meantime Madhav has high fever and the guilt and self blame involved in the death of Dhruva is reversed through the way she eventually helps Madhav regain his health. When she kneels by him to examine the feverish boy, the rain pours down as it did when Dhruva was drowned:

And then with a shocking suddenness it began. She heard it coming, rushing to meet them with an eager ferocity. It beat on the windows, the tiled roof, with a maniac fury. She thought she heard Baba say something to her
through the din, but she could not hear him. She sat by the sleeping boy, unmoving, as if she had become catatonic. (TDHT 210)

Saru cares for Madhav in a night long vigil by his bedside which enables her to attain a fine balance of her professional medical identity and sisterly-maternal care. Saving Madhav gives her freedom from guilt by atoning for Dhruva. The time of the year is the same that Dhruva died in, the end of the mango season. But the rain this time carries a life giving message:

There was a smell of wet earth and rotting leaves. The trees, their dusty dirty leaves, washed by the rains to a tender sparkling green were like symbols of renewal. It’s over, she thought. That’s done with. Things will be alright now. (TDHT 211)

The stay in the ancestral home has led to internal changes in Saru, though on the surface there is no apparent change. She has become a successful career woman who can relate to her feminine side, not act negatively to it. Seema Bawa points to how the narrative structure of homecoming has its advantages in offering situations which allow the protagonist to “journey back in time to recapitulate
childhood experiences, to give voice to silent terrors and secret feelings of guilt and to relate the present to the past” (Bawa 36). This journey into the profound depths of her unconscious has helped to heal the split within her psyche, restoring emotional and spiritual health.

Jaya, the narrator protagonist of TLS, is confronted with a similar problem of fixing her identity, of recovering the self from the roles of dutiful daughter and submissive wife. She seems to reject the very idea of a unitary self. She muses:

As if there is such a thing as one self, intact and whole, waiting to be discovered. On the contrary, there are so many, each self attached like a Siamese twin to a self of another person, neither able to exist without the other.

(TLS 161)

Anuradha Roy notes that this plurality of self is much more in keeping with the complex search for identity confronting the Indian woman today. Jaya is faced with the task of disentangling the self from all the various selves it had become attached to, all the time knowing that these too cannot be summarily dismissed but must be given their due position without swamping the woman’s individuality.
Jaya seeks for an honest understanding of herself and it is her Dadar flat, with its family history and memories that engages her in a prolonged phase of intense introspection. The flat seems to exorcise the ghosts of the past where Jaya has fantasies and hallucinations that tend to merge with the reality expressing the disturbance in her psyche. The past and the present are so interdependent that the fantasies are created by the present need. Mohan and Jaya leave their children Rahul and Rati in the care of Mohan's sister Rupa and her husband Ashok, before they move to this flat to escape temporarily from the money scandal in which Mohan was involved. As they reach the place, the climbing up the stairs of the flat is given in third person thus distancing Jaya from the scene. She rejects Mohan's help when he extends his hand offering her the keys to the flat. Instead she takes some keys from her bag and unlocks the door, while Mohan simply stands there. There is a role reversal here, Jaya being in command, the family house bestowing her with the much needed confidence. The moment becomes significant in that the unlocking is an unlocking of the past, the beginning of a journey into the inner depths of the unconscious, a process which proves to be both painful and complex. The Dadar flat was her family home, the ownership of which seems to instil her with
the much needed confidence. It is worth noting how the ghosts of Makarandmama, Ai, Dada and his friends seem to spring out at Jaya the moment she enters the flat. “All these people seemed so real to me that I looked at Mohan wondering whether he could see them too” (TLS 12). But there was distaste on his face, the wrinkling of his nose showing that he was aware only of the smell of mildew and rot in the unused place. Here Jaya reconstructs the memory of her relationship with Kamat, “Kamat comes again and again ruthlessly elbowing himself into the story of ours” (TLS 14). He is an artist who takes an aesthetic delight in her beauty. There had been an ease in their relationship which she could not have with anyone else. The flat enables her to think over the folk tale of the Crow and the Sparrow, a story that was told to her by her mother, where the sparrow, playing the mother, is cunningly ruthless to others for the interests of her children. She would definitely not be like the sparrow mother, insensitive to the sorrows around her for the sake of her own family. There is disturbance in her psyche and Jaya drifts between sleep and waking, hearing the roar of the sea as she imagined a move into the sea for suicide which changes to the sound of the local train. Then comes the memory of Kusum who was deserted by her husband for
not bearing him a male child. The internalisation of patriarchal values had driven the woman mad and Jaya had looked after her for sometime in the hope of restoring her sanity but had failed in the attempt. Kusum had jumped into an unused well and put an end to her useless life. The story of Kusum continues in the story of Nayana as Jaya could see a common thread of continuity running through them. Nayana, the sweeper of the flat, was perpetually getting pregnant, each time hoping for a boy child. Then there is Jeeja, whose husband was a drunkard who had taken a mistress as Jeeja could not provide him with a son. He had a son, Rajaram, by her. Jeeja’s husband dies and later the other woman too of tuberculosis, leaving her two children to be looked after by Jeeja. Rajaram’s wife Tara and their three children had become Jeeja’s responsibility since the man was a drunkard and beat up his wife. Tara lacked Jeeja’s reticence and courage and was always moaning over her fate. Jeeja used to shut her up saying, “Don’t forget, he keeps the kumkum on your forehead. What is a woman without that?” (TLS 53) To women like Jeeja, the patriarchal values seem to be an anchor pushing them forward with a single minded purpose in life.

Jaya’s reaches the height of anguish and despair when Mohan
leaves home in a huff accusing her of not supporting him at a time of crisis. What follows is a series of visions of death- Sapthagiri ajji’s death, her father’s death and the chantings of “Raam naam satya hai”. Dazed and confused, she proceeds to go upstairs, hoping to find solace in Kamat, forgetting that he is dead. The next moment she becomes one with Kusum, “Kusum-as if the thought of her had been an Open Sesame, I found myself engulfed by the ghost of Kusum, welcoming me to the category of unwanted wives, deserted wives, claiming me joyfully at last as a companion” (TLS 125). The vision of death brings out hidden feelings of guilt, the guilt of leaving Kusum, of having gone through an abortion without Mohan’s knowledge, of avoiding her hostel mate Leena who spent the weekends with a married man and of not reporting about Kamat when he was found dead in his flat. Then there is news of her son Rahul running away from Rupa and Ashok which drives her to the dizzy heights of delirium. As if haunted by some fearsome spectre she rushes out into the rain. It is difficult to ascertain whether the events that followed really happened or whether it is hallucination. The heightened state of excitement causes a blurring of reality, memory and vision as she watches two young men and a jean clad girl. The girl snatches a cigarette and starts smoking swaying
and tottering from one to the other, while they, one after the other fondle her breasts, the girl being unaware of this. She cries out ‘Stop’ but they laugh at her. She thinks the girl is her daughter Rati, the nightmarish vision appearing to be the future generation of women - listless, drug-addicted and sexually exploited. Returning home late, she falls unconscious and is nursed by Mukta, Manda and Nilima. It is to Mukta that she confides her inner fears, finding comfort in her. Mukta too was encouraged by Kamat to do her teacher’s training and take up a job, after the death of her husband. But the minor heart attack that Kamat suffered had made him terrified of death. As Mukta narrates the loneliness of the man who had to face death all alone, “his pain filled this room and we could both of us feel it, Mukta and I. The fellowship of pain seemed to bind us together; we were like two patients in a hospital, suffering from the same disease, lying on two adjacent beds” (TLS 186). Jaya shamefully realises that the man had tried to reach out to her in his loneliness and she had run away frightened because she was Mohan’s wife. Then she suddenly realises that “it was not Mohan but marriage that had made me circumspect” (TLS 187). The veneer of the self which she has created at the dictates of social norms cracks and Jaya undergoes a crisis of recriminations
and self admonishments. After Mukta leaves, Jaya is left all alone in
the stillness of the night with thoughts of the past, the chaotic sequence
of events that made up her life. “It was like looking through the eyehole
of the magic peepshow of my childhood” (187). Now she finds the
picture of a girl, a child wearing a dress with pockets, thrusting her
hands in them, “feeling heady with the excitement of finding
unexpected resources within herself. That child was me. With this
discovery came another thought. I will begin with her, with this child.”
(187). The change had to come from within her, she had to depend on
her inner resources. Towards the end Rahul comes back with Vasant,
Mohan’s younger brother, and there is a telegram from Mohan
informing that he had sorted out the problem and would be returning
soon. The stay in the flat has brought the suppressed memories to the
consciousness, the churning of the memories and fantasies helping to
regain an inner balance, bringing with it the meaning of the line from
the Bhagwad-gita, ‘Yathecchasi tatha kuru’ - the final words of
Krishna’s long sermon to Arjuna, ‘do as you desire.’ It means that
Krishna has given Arjuna the knowledge and now it is up to Arjuna to
decide on what to do, the choice is his. Having attained self knowledge
it is up to Jaya to do the needful, without waiting for Mohan to change.
Though people do not change overnight, one can always hope, since it is hope that makes life possible. “And if there is anything I know now it is this: life has always to be made possible” (193).

Jiji reconstructs the past through memory, fantasy and the writings in Baba’s diary. Her relationship with her mother had been estranged when she disapproved of Jiji’s passionate love for Shyam and her marriage to him. Later the relationship becomes more alienated when Shyam has an affair with Malu, Jiji’s sister, making her pregnant. Jiji returns to the house to help Baba, who is old and weak, the homecoming enables her to lay the ghosts of the past and to regain an inner balance. Though wary at first to read the diary of her father, with its personal revelations, she is overcome by a desire to know her past, as in Baba’s words in the diary:

Does she have no idea of the devouring thirst humans have for knowing their origins, does she not know how tireless we can be in searching them out? What is history after all but one facet of this search? (MO 203)

Jiji, just as the other female protagonists, faces insecurity because she is unable to decide on her roots, with a sense of not belonging to either her own family or her husband’s family. Her
passionate longing for Shyam, made her a stranger to her parents, especially to her mother. Later, after marriage, Shyam’s family could not offer her the warmth which she received in her childhood. It was in the seaside villa, Ocean Vista, that she led the happiest days in her life in the company of Shyam. It also held precious memories of being reunited with her parents and Malu. But tragedy struck with Malu becoming pregnant because of Shyam and later Shyam’s death by drowning. This had severed the last of her ties with the family accentuating her sense of alienation. Years later, the return to the familial house gives her a chance for introspection of her past which helps her in understanding her parents and others. Through the writings in Baba’s diary, she becomes aware that she never really knew the people that she loved so much. The homecoming helps her to know her parents as real individuals, not as figures she had created in her childhood, as pacifiers and comforters. She is able to empathise with her mother who was almost frigid, never responding sexually to her father. It is no wonder that she showed distaste towards her daughter for exhibiting her passion for Shyam. Her father, though he could understand his daughter, was helpless in bringing about a reconciliation. These myriad memories help her in attaining a self
identity. Shashi Deshpande seems to point to the importance of maintaining balance in relationships, leading to the formation of a meaningful identity, as she says, “An identity becomes active, positive and meaningful only in relation to others. The whole potential of who we are and what we are is realized only through our relationship with others” (MO 56).

The ideology of a small, loving family often masks gender injustice within it, since the image of the ideal family often confines women, subordinating them to men in private households. This could be the reason why the female protagonists in Shashi Deshpande’s novels feel discontent with the prosperous life of nuclear existence. The contrast in atmosphere between the painfully furnished nuclear home and the relaxed untidiness of the ancestral home is interestingly depicted in these novels. The ancestral house is contrasted to the modern house with its hectic pace of living. In RS, Indu remembers her family life in the city as something very artificial. Everyone, including herself pretended to be rational, unprejudiced and broadminded, discussing problems of unemployment and poverty in a very intelligent and solemn manner. But in reality no one cared for anything except their own precious selves and their walled in lives.
She remembers how the sheets had to be changed twice a week and the beds had to be made perfectly “the sheets tucked in without a wrinkle, the blankets folded into a perfect square, the pillows a straight line” (RS 31). As she lay on the none too clean sheets in her familial house, the smells carried soothing memories, the blanket with the smell of Kaki’s body, the mattress carrying the pungent odour of child’s urine. “And yet I stretched myself on the bed with relief” (RS 31). The modern home can be said to be efficient and practical but devoid of the emotional dimensions of the ancient houses. Though with a lot of effort, the modern home is made up to date with the latest furniture and the right flower arrangement to go with the trend. But the ancestral houses remain the same untouched by the changes around. It is only when Indu returns to the ancestral house that she enjoys the ease and comfort of the haphazard household of “cups without ears, saucers that never matched, and most of the time, no spoons. Tea and sugar were added by the guess method. Surprisingly, the tea was almost always good” (RS 35).

The same is the case with Jaya’s familial house in Sapthagiri, the outside sitting room remaining unchanged like a museum. The chairs along the walls, the tall round table with carved legs remained
as it is. The old grandfather clock had stopped ticking and it was forever a quarter to eleven in that room. Time seems to stand still in this womb like existence of the ancient house. It is a contrast to her nuclear home in Churchgate which she remembers as very neat and well furnished. There were a number of electrical gadgets that were to be kept in order. There were the glassware which were to sparkle and the furniture and curios which had to be spotless and dust-free. The two rows of mahogany elephants in the living room had to be dusted and polished. Here she was free, as she reminiscences:

There was nothing to be cleaned, nothing to be arranged or rearranged, put back in its place, tidied. I was free of all those monsters that had ruled my life, gadgets that had to be kept in order, the glassware that had to sparkle, the furniture...(TLS 25)

The nuclear home, which is a symbol of persona can be contrasted to the ancestral home, which is a symbol of the self. The modern nuclear home can be said to represent the persona, which is the role society requires of us. As analysed by Jung, the persona is a complicated system of relations between the individual consciousness and society, a kind of mask designed on the one hand to make a definite
impression upon others, and on the other, to conceal the true nature of the individual. Taking account of these expectations which society demands, the protagonist is forced to submerge her individuality in these expectations leading to the construction of an artificial personality. This building up of "too good a persona" (Jung, 1982:93) ends up in irritability. Jaya in TLS breaks out into a hysterical laughter towards the end since it is an outlet for her suffocation. Her persona, which was totally opposed to the self was causing disturbance in her psyche. The Dadar flat, which is a symbol of her past with its lingering memories and family history, provides a soothing atmosphere for her distraught nerves. Just as the pictures on the walls emerging even through the layers of paint, the memories surface to her consciousness causing an integration of the conscious and unconscious mind. Here the ancient ancestral home represents the self of a person, before the development of ego. It is said that at the time of birth, ego is completely identified with the self, which is "the centre and totality of being" (Edinger 7). As the child grows, the experiences he gains in the process develops ego and ego-self separation begins. The ancestral home, representing the self, is contrasted with the modern nuclear home, representing the persona. Jung observes:
The persona is a complicated system of relations between the individual consciousness and society, fittingly enough a mask designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and on the other, to conceal the true nature of the individual. (Jung, 1982 91)

Taking account of these expectations which society demands, the protagonist is forced to submerge her individuality in these expectations leading to the construction of an artificial personality. Jung suggests that this dichotomy could be more so for women in patriarchy because they are groomed to be good wives and mothers. They are made to develop a flawless social mask by the rigid society by encouraging virtues like submissiveness and patience, accompanied by a suppression of intelligence and ambition. Later, during the 'middle life crisis' (Jung, 1982 45), which overcomes intelligent and strong people at around thirty five years of age, the persona detects a split within herself because aspects of the self could be totally opposed to the persona. At this point the true self breaks out of the persona. It has been observed that a person in the 'middle life crisis' gets into a retrospective mood "instead of looking forward, one looks
backward...and one begins to take stock, to see how one’s life has developed up to this point” (Jung, 1982 45). The ‘middle life crisis’ is resolved when a person achieves ‘Nirdvandva.’ ‘Nirdvandva’ is the absence of duality or the reconciliation of opposites—a stage reached when the person no longer passively lives out the persona but masters the role with his/her uniqueness. It is a wise and mature compromise between the persona and the self. This is symbolically achieved through the sexual union which takes place in the ancestral house. All duality is thus transcended making the female protagonist return to society to establish stronger interpersonal ties. Shashi Deshpande seems to point to the fact that it is the persona of the wife and mother that becomes stifling for the woman, not the institution of marriage. These women return to their husband and children with the determination to be an individual and not a mere role/persona.

The nuclear homes were routine spaces where Shashi Deshpande’s heroines could not cope with. It is in the intimacy of the ancestral homes that Shashi Deshpande’s heroines manage to retrieve a different perception of the nature of their family members. The characters respond to the sensory environment of the interior spaces of the ancestral homes with an eagerness which surprises them. The
atmosphere here controls the mind, helping to probe deep into the psyche, bringing about a balanced ego-self axis which helps them to realize their identity. Neither the revolutionary way, nor the adherence to the stereotype role model helps them in their quest to know themselves. A proper development of consciousness became possible under the balanced control of the unconscious over the conscious (ego). It is their looking back into the past which makes this self analysis possible. In the process of their psychological journey into their memories, their relationship with their roots is established. The female protagonists in these novels do not attain a wholeness of personality when they try to keep away from the past and tradition. The happiness which they hoped to attain, after cutting off all relation with the past, seemed to evade them. It is only when they return to the ancestral home and interact with the family members and past memories that they attain a balanced personality. It is interesting to note how as a new personality is evolved, there is a readjustment of the values and relations that they had earlier, thus leading to a conformity between the old and the new. There is a constant interaction between the past and the present, each moulding and shaping the other in the evolutionary process.
Indu, Kalyani and Jiji come to heirship in different ways. Indu never had thoughts of owning the house when she went away from the house or when she returned in response to Akka’s summons. It is as though Akka had instinctively chosen her, knowing that she would do justice to the big household, where Akka had been the ruling matriarch. So when Akka, in her deathbed, calls her, she just walks into the ancient house to realise that she was now the heir to the property, jewels and power over the family members. Her only task was to decide how she could do justice to her role of helping the family members, who seemed to be in need of money. It is worthwhile to consider that she does not seek the advice of anyone, not even her husband. On the other hand, her husband does not seem to be aware of these happenings at all. Indu relies entirely on her inner reservoir of strength, a kind of feminine intuitive power, the house boosting her confidence.

Kalyani becomes the heir to The Big House in SR after a considerable wait. The return of Sumi and her three daughters to the old house gives her purpose in life since her husband Shripati had stopped talking to her after losing the mentally retarded son at the railway station. The house, with its treasured family history, is a part
of Kalyani, and it is impossible to see her as a separate entity, away from the house. After Shripati and Sumi are killed in an accident, the ownership of the house comes to her, fortifying her in looking after her three granddaughters who were now motherless.

It is Jiji, in the latest novel MO, who fights tooth and nail to protect the house from real estate agents, and that too not for herself but for the illegitimate daughter born out of an affair between her husband and her younger sister. Her resolve to hold on to the family house is hardened when she comes to know that Gayatri and RK had sold their house not because of termites, as she was made to believe, but due to stone throwing which compelled them to sell it. Jiji decides that she would not be forced out of the house by real estate agents, who had sent an intruder to frighten her into selling the house. It is prime property, with the main road on the right and a quiet dead-end street in front. It requires great courage and determination, but it fortifies her to think of, “RK and his sense of absolute rectitude, of Baba’s simplicity and his hard earned money, of Gayatri’s goodness and I know I will be betraying them if I let the house fall into criminal hands. I will hold on to it” (MO 141). Thus Indu, Kalyani and Jiji are motivated by an urge to help the family members, but compared to
Indu and Kalyani, Jiji marks a clear advancement from the point of view of self determination.

Jung extends Freudian theory of psychology from its purely personal circle to a wider area of racial subconsciousness. The racial memories are stored in human genes as every human being has to live not only his own personal life, but also a larger life which includes his family, community, nation, race etc. The experiences thereof are recorded in every cell. These experiences have their conscious, subconscious levels also. The subconscious is a region of darkness which holds within it a whole world of wonders and possibilities. Even the conscious mind is under the constant influence of the subconscious. Though man is called a rational animal, he is very much under the influence of the irrational forces or the supra rational forces of the subconscious mind. This subconscious, acting at the level of family life is symbolized by the ancestral homes in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. Whatever be the rational explanations of the various human actions narrated in the novels all these are controlled and guided by the family ideals of these human actors. The neat nuclear houses may represent only a very small part of the consciousness of the characters. Three fourths of their awareness is determined by their
group consciousness. In other words, ancient families are archetypes in the Jungian sense of the family consciousness. The unclaimed, dusty, dark, unused interiors fit the archetype eminently. The nuclear homes were prosaic literal spaces where Shashi Deshpande’s heroines could not cope with. It is in the ancestral homes that the woman manages to retrieve and reclaim the mysteries of the nether side of human nature. The environment in these ancient structures evokes a dreamlike state of consciousness where darkness, shadows and rich variations of sensual stimuli encourage the mind into speculation. Perhaps that is the reason why in all the novels the characters are within the ambit of the ancestral home. The female protagonists in the novels of Shashi Deshpande become disgusted with her carefully chalked out life in the nuclear home. They are suffocated by the artificiality with which their role had to be acted out. It is at this juncture that the female protagonist is influenced by the collective unconscious or ‘psychic inheritance’ with the ancestral home acting as the archetype. They are motivated by this and they succumb to its magnetic pull even though they had decided not to come back. Some of them return to the ancestral home even without the consent of their husbands. It is evident that the home and the family are archetypes which represent the idea of blood relationships and ties that run deeper than those
based on conscious reasons. An instance of deep seated unconscious memories of the house can be seen in Sumi in AMT. Her ancestral home had been her refuge when she was deserted by her husband Gopal. Though she had reconciled herself to the fact that she had to live life alone with the added responsibility of bringing up her three daughters, she had a feeling that the house was not accepting her. The house was her refuge and shelter but there was always a feeling that the walls of the house were crying out that the very reason for their existence was a son. It unsettled her that her daughters and herself were interlopers, intruding into her parents house. The birth of a son called for a celebration and Sumi could sense the adoration of the male child. "It must have been this way in the stable in Bethlehem, in Nanda’s house on the banks of the Yamuna in Gokul. The male child belongs" (AMT 71). Such disquieting thoughts urge her to go in search for a house along with the help of a real estate agent. They go to see many different houses but somehow Sumi is never satisfied, much to the discontent of the agent. It is then that she decides to build a house according to her liking. But surprisingly, the rough sketch that she draws is the plan of the ancestral house. She tries again and again but it is the same sketch that appears on the paper. Though it is
not intentional, there seems to be some unknown force which seems to guide her fingers as she drew the sketch. The rooms in her ancestral house were so ingrained in her consciousness that however much she tried, the image came to the surface, influencing her in her search for a house. This may be one of the reasons why the houses that Sumi visits fail her expectation. Without realizing it, she was looking out for the house in her unconscious mind, which was none other than The Big House. Her pattern for activity was guided by this deep seated memory.

According to Jung, the personal unconscious is a repository of thoughts and feelings that are too painful to be held in conscious awareness. These repressed contents Jung called the shadow, which tends to be “projected” as characteristics perceived in others. The female protagonists try to attain happiness by a change of scene through marriage. It is only later that they realize that the happiness they hope for is out of reach and the change only leads to hatred towards their husbands. The contents found at this deep level are more profound. This is because a deep level of psyche which can be called gender-specific influences them in unknown ways. Jung regards the configuration of such contents as a vast mental universe, containing
a constellation of patterns that he called archetypes, or symbols, that represent universal images commonly experienced in all cultures and societies. He said that archetypes are part of the genetic inheritance of all humans and, as such, are mental contents that exist prior to the formation of consciousness. In *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, he observes:

There is an *a priori* factor in all human activities, namely the inborn, preconscious and unconscious individual structure of the psyche. The pre-conscious psyche – for example, that of a new born infant – is not an empty vessel into which, under favourable conditions, practically anything can be poured. On the contrary, it is a tremendously complicated, sharply defined individual entity which appears indeterminate to us only because we cannot see it directly. (Jung, 1969 77)

This part of the unconscious is universal and its contents and modes of behaviour are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. But there could be superficial variations according to class, creed, nation, sex etc. There could be a pattern shared by a clan or a family. It is this family consciousness which bind the members
together, influencing them constantly. Since human beings have a tendency to respond to life situations in terms of the archetypal images, the archetypes can influence the interactions within relationships. The coexistence with the archetypes, which are emanations of the collective unconscious, is the only solution to the problems that modern man face. A person may not be able to act in a normal manner when there is a dissociation between his personal and collective unconscious. So it becomes necessary to integrate the unconscious into consciousness. This process is termed by Jung as the 'individuation process'. Shashi Deshpande narrates the process that takes place within the emotional domain of women. It seems that they are all searching unconsciously for a new cultural pattern based on the archetype of house drawn from the deepest and most creative levels of the collective unconscious. This new cultural pattern not only encompasses many of the older values and symbols, but also expands beyond them to include broader, more spiritual values. A balanced relationship between ego and self is necessary for a balanced outlook on life. This is attained through the rebels returning to the ancestral home and interacting with it. Jung says that for an all round development of personality, there should be a development of the faculties that lie
hidden in the unconscious which should be synthesised with the conscious life. Thereby one becomes aware of his or her oneness with the entire humanity and the universe at large. Such a person moves closer to the self, thereby focusing deeper on it. The self realised person becomes less selfish. J. Bhavani observes how “the marital discord at the centre of each novel is merely the fallout of the heroine’s struggle for individuation” (Bhavani 22). The ancestral house representing the feminine unconscious urges the female protagonists to attain this integration. Indu, Jaya, Saru and Jiji return to their ancestral house which is a place where the women get the longed for space where they can analyse and sort out their feelings without the intervention of their husbands and children. These huge structures built by the ancestors play a vital role in shaping the destiny of their occupants. This is true especially in the case of the female protagonist. She is able to understand the very meaning of life during the stay in the ancestral home. This instills self confidence in her and she realises that she can be herself instead of being one who is always trying to suppress her identity in order to please the family and society. She need not suppress part of her self in order to play out the role as wife and mother. It is clear that the natal house and the family members
shape the individuality of the female protagonist. Indu decides not only to go back to her husband but also to write for the cause of women. Saru, the doctor resolves to be of service to the poor. The female protagonists in the novels reach an inner balance and equilibrium by realising this oneness with humanity during their stay in the ancestral homes. This inner change which they undergo would not have been possible without these ancient structures. The frustration they felt till then is over. The shadow is dispelled and the dark holds no terrors for them.

The ancestral home endows the woman with the physical and emotional space necessary to make her aware of her responsibilities as a daughter as well as a wife and mother and also to reclaim the mother-daughter relationship. This makes it possible for her to analyse her own feelings and emotions and to come to terms with them, helping her to carve out a space for herself in the social milieu. Understanding herself and overcoming the feelings of guilt and fear is an important step towards her empowerment. This psychological threshold is very significant in a woman's life. It implies a pause, a review and an assessment of her resources and giving herself the autonomy to mould the future. This is the process involved in crossing the psychological
threshold and arriving at one’s personhood. Indira J. Parikh observes:

In the journey of a woman’s life, the psychological threshold is determined by the woman accepting her maturity, crystallizing her identity, coming to terms with her past, laying down some of the ghosts of childhood and adolescence, taking charge of her own destiny, having a world view of herself and others around her, investing in the self, in the system and discovering the spirit of her own being and becoming. (Parikh 43)

The return to the house of her birth seems to be the psychological threshold for the woman in these novels, the process helping her to review her life as she evolves as the heir to the structure. The added responsibility makes her feel worthy of herself, giving her the confidence to move on in life. In TLS, Jaya and Mohan, retreat to the Dadar flat, when Mohan is implicated in a corruption case involving some of the high ranking officials. As she accompanies her husband, she is reminded of Sita, “Sita following her husband into exile, Savitri dogging Death to claim her husband, Draupadi stoically sharing her husband’s travails”…(TLS 11). She is aware that she and her husband are like “two bullocks yoked together” (TLS 11) and
there is no alternative left for her to choose a different direction for fear of causing pain to her partner. Hence the money scandal and the retreat to the unfashionable suburbs of Bombay comes as a blessing, an escape from the unendurable monotony. This family home of Jaya, with its history and memories offers her the space to pause at the psychological threshold allowing her to look back at her past, to connect her experience with those around her. She remembers the self that she had forgotten, her husband's Suhasini, "the soft smiling placid motherly woman. A woman who lovingly nurtured her family. A woman who coped" (TLS 15). But in reality, she was different from Suhasini or Sita, the woman of the weekly column that Jaya writes and these roles do not offer her the promises and the intimations of a fulfilled life. She could not fit into the role of Sita, whom she detested and is distanced from her former self-Suhasini. She is also remote from "the job I wanted to take, the baby I had wanted to adopt, and the anti-price campaign I'd wanted to take part in" (TLS 120). But she could have pursued these ambitions on her own instead of accusing her husband for her frustration. When Mohan leaves home, blaming her for not supporting him at a time of crisis, she is left alone in the flat to collect scraps of her life and gather them together to realise
that she was tossing in between several selves without listening to
the prompting of her own inner voice, submerging herself in the
protective shadows of Sita or Suhasini. She emerges victorious by
refusing to succumb to any prescribed role model. In DTHT, Sarita’s
return to her parental home is a move into her past and into her
subconscious as she undertakes the therapeutic journey. It is interesting
that she repeatedly asks herself why she has come back to a place
which she had promised never to return. She tries to find several
answers to the question. The purpose of her visit must have been to
see how her father was getting along, or maybe to mourn her dead
mother or to claim her right in the home of her birth, or to escape the
unhappiness of her own marriage. The house, shabby though it may
be, was hers by right and she was ready to be the heir to it. Here, she
revisits the past through the tulsi plant, her mother’s room, the presence
of Madhav who reminded her of her dead brother Dhruva, the
photographs of her children showing the resemblance between her
mother and her daughter, between Abhi and Dhruva, between her
mother and herself. Finally she breaks through the barrier of resistance
which her mother had drawn around her and is able to articulate her
anguished thoughts to her father which helps in expelling the terrors
of the past. The same hostility between the mother and daughter was present in her relationship with her own daughter, Renu. Sarita became nervous, unsure and uncertain of herself when her daughter seemed to stare at her critically, reminding her of 'a room whose doors are closed'. The hostility between the mother and daughter seems to be a conflict between claims and roles, her yearning to be loved like her brother and to be able to communicate with others. The homecoming begins with a perception of the bare ground in her mother's backyard and the hollyhocks that Madhav has planted there. But later it becomes a journey to comfort and security for which she had been searching all along.

The theme of homecoming is closely related to the motif of the search for a lost paradise or utopia. In Somerset Maugham's novels like The Razor's Edge, The Moon and Six Pence, some characters go to distant far east countries in the quest for this lost paradise. On the other hand, Thomas Hardy's 'native' returns to the Egdon Heath. The very name of Alex Haley's novel, Roots, is immensely suggestive and is rich with the subconscious yearnings of the American blacks as Toni Morrison's novels are. Another theme connected with this motif is the search for the Holy Grail. The great Arthurian legends
represent a theme not much different from that of the search for the ancestral home in Shashi Deshpande's novels. It is also reminiscent of Hagar Shipley's discovery of herself through her escape into the vast wilderness of Canada, in the novel *The Stone Angel* by the Canadian writer Margaret Laurence. In T.S. Eliot's epoch making poem *The Wasteland*, the protagonist is in search for the waters of faith in the arid scenerio of the 20th century. Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* is a recent example exhibiting the same characteristic.

The search represents human effort for a better tomorrow. It will continue as far as we exist. Sometimes our efforts will result in a happy resolution of difficulties. Sometimes not. But in Shashi Deshpande's novels, the efforts are rewarded. The homecoming of the heroine to claim what is her right in the natal home can never more be resisted. Now slowly, the laws are turning to be in her favour and she is waking up.