

**THE PLACE OF ANCESTRAL HOMES  
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FEMALE SELF  
AS SEEN IN THE NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE**

**PREETHA M.M.**

**Research Supervisor**

**Dr. P. RAMACHANDRAN**

**Department of English  
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**

**THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT  
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN ENGLISH  
2007**

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled THE PLACE OF ANCESTRAL HOMES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FEMALE SELF AS SEEN IN THE NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a record of bonafide research carried out by Preetha M.M, under my supervision and guidance. No part of this thesis has been submitted earlier for the award of any degree, diploma, title or recognition.



**Dr. P. RAMACHANDRAN**  
Research Supervisor in English  
University of Calicut

Calicut,  
January 2007.

*Dedicated to my father*

**PREETHA M.M.**  
Lecturer Selection Grade  
Department of English  
Sree Kerala Varma College  
Thrissur, Kerala

## **DECLARATION**

I, PREETHA M.M, part-time Research Scholar at the Department of English, University of Calicut, hereby declare that this thesis **THE PLACE OF ANCESTRAL HOMES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FEMALE SELF AS SEEN IN THE NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE**, which is submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a bonafide record of research work done by me and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

Research Centre  
Department of English  
University of Calicut  
Calicut  
January 2007.



**PREETHA M.M.**

---

## Acknowledgements

---

I wish to express my deep sense of gratitude to my supervising teacher Dr. P. Ramachandran, Head of the Dept. of English (Retd), Sree Kerala Varma College, Thrissur, without whose scholarly guidance, this work would not have materialised. His profound knowledge and gentle approach in guiding me has enormously helped evolving my work in its right and serious perspective.

I owe a lot to Shashi Deshpande for sparing her valuable time for discussions at her residence in Bangalore with much interest in my work. I am indebted to Sri Jaleel, Head of the Dept. of English, Calicut University and also Dr. Sankaran Ravindran and Dr. B. Sreedevi who were very kind and helpful. I take this opportunity to thank The Cochin Devassom Board, Thrissur and Sri R. Gopalakrishna Pillai, Principal, Sree Kerala Varma College for enabling me to pursue this project.

My sincere gratitude to the vastu expert Sri. Kanippayoor Krishnan Namboodiripad for discussing important aspects of vastu shastra. I thank Sri Sudhir Kumar Marat, Engineer, P.W.D, Thrissur for helping me with the sketches and also my cousin brother Swaroop Anish, Sr. Vice President, Prestige Group, Bangalore for providing information on the vastu shastra of Karnataka.

I am also indebted to Smt. M.R. Jalaja, Head of the Dept. of English, Sree Kerala Varma College, my colleagues Dr. T.K.Nandakumar, Dr. C. Rajan and all others who have helped me in one way or the other.

I express my gratitude to the staff of the following libraries for helping me procure books for my research:

Department Library (English), Calicut University, Calicut.

Central Library, Calicut University, Calicut.

SCILET, American College, Madurai.

CIEFL, Hyderabad.

Public Library, Thrissur.

Sāvis Library, Thrissur.

Department Library (English), Kerala University, Thiruvananthapuram.

Public Library, Thiruvananthapuram.

Holy Cross College Library, Trichy.

I am grateful to Ms. Printwell who made my work into well bound form. I owe immensely to my mother, my husband, Junju & Raru for their genuine support at home.

## CONTENTS

---

|   | Page |
|---|------|
| INTRODUCTION                              | 1    |
| CHAPTER I DWELLING IN THE TEXT            | 37   |
| CHAPTER II THE RESURGENT WOMAN            | 69   |
| CHAPTER III THE EXTINCT LAW OF THE FATHER | 119  |
| CHAPTER IV THE HOMECOMING                 | 151  |
| CONCLUSION                                | 188  |
| ILLUSTRATIONS                             | 213  |
| WORKS CITED                               | 219  |

---

# Introduction

Preetha M.M “The place of ancestral homes in the development of the female self as seen in the novels of Shashi Deshpande” Thesis. Department of English, University of Calicut, 2007

## Introduction

Shashi Deshpande occupies a prominent position among Indian English novelists. She was born in Dharwad, Karnataka as the daughter of the renowned Kannada writer and Sanskrit scholar Adya Rangachar, better known as Sriranga. She has degrees in Economics, Law and English and a diploma in Journalism. Her literary debut dates back to 1980 with her The Dark Holds no Terrors [TDHT], followed by Roots and Shadows [RS] (1983). That Long Silence [TLS] (1988) brought her the prestigious Sahitya Academy Award. Then came The Binding Vine [BV] (1993), A Matter of Time [AMT] (1996), Small Remedies [SR] (2000), Come Up and Be Dead (2003) and Moving On [MO](2004). There are a number of short story collections and essays to her credit. Shashi Deshpande's novels appeal to the readers for their rootedness in everyday India. She writes in her clear lucid prose style about a society and a culture to which we belong. Family relationships have always fascinated the novelist and she is aware that that is where everything begins. In the Indian context, ancestral homes and family relationships have always had their own importance. The ancestral home is the stage where the different family members come together, be it a festive occasion or the death of a family member.

In the novels of Shashi Deshpande, the characters come to life when they are set against the background of these structures, which are places associated with nostalgic memories of sounds and smells. She draws her brush on this family canvas to bring about lasting pictures of characters, their inner turmoils and silent desires. It requires no plentitude of imagination to find a parallel between these architectural constructs and the forces of consciousness which control a cluster of people within the limits of certain expected norms of behaviour and patterns of culture. The dark interiors of these houses are the hidden caves of the collective unconscious of a clan. No wonder that these profound recesses have the power in them to mould the people whose lot brings them to their shade. Any attempt to fight them only helps to engulf one deeper. To put it differently, the human beings are held tight to their family background by unbreakable bonds of a love hate relationship which seeps into their very grains. They have no life without the aforesaid relationships. They would be very different characters in their absence. This relationship decides their very goals of existence, their mutual affinities, dispositions, attitudes, inclinations etc. The arms of their relationship are long enough to influence them even when they live far away in the protection of their lodges, hostels

or nuclear families. Indu, Saru and Jaya are not quite themselves when they live their separate lives with their husbands. They cannot chart their own courses in the independence of their new found havens. They are happy only when they get a chance to go back and fall under the magic of a collective existence. It is only then that they grow and evolve themselves into their absolute selves. Their potentialities have been till then waiting to unfold themselves in the native soil.

Ancestral homes in Shashi Deshpande's novels are not just places of living. They are not mere structures in stones and mortar to accommodate certain human beings. Normally a house is looked upon just as a place of dwelling. It only provides a locale for the human drama to unfold. It does not have any importance beyond that. It has no more function to perform than to provide a roof over the heads of its inhabitants, or a respite from the vagaries of climatic variations. No feelings or powers of thinking are associated with it. No human sentiments animate it. As part of the environment of human destiny, it just remains in existence. But in the novels of Shashi Deshpande, the houses perform more than the function of providing shelter to their inhabitants. They seem to have a life of their own, with an involvement in the feelings and emotions of the family members. In

these novels, the influence of the houses on the human characters are more subtle like the influence of nature in the Wessex novels of Thomas Hardy or the novels of Bronte sisters. The very name of Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights represents the world of the passionate emotions of love and revenge, 'wuthering' being a Yorkshire dialect word for stormy weather. The life represented by it is in strong contrast to that of the rational civilized world symbolized by Thrushcross Grange. The background nature pervades the novel, and the landscape seems to come alive in the hands of the novelist. This kind of a subtle influence of the background house can be seen on the feelings, emotions and actions of the characters in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. In fact the characters and their actions revolve round these houses. Though Emily Bronte and Shashi Deshpande are both women writers, the Wuthering Heights represents male dominance, whereas, the ancient houses of Shashi Deshpande are full of female sensibilities. The female protagonists in the novels are motivated by the powerful ancestral structures and they find themselves pulled to these houses after ten to fifteen years of married life away from it. There is a kind of urge in them to explore the unknown recesses of the house and family which can be seen as a desire for self discovery. In the novels

of Shashi Deshpande, the ancestral house represent a tradition to which some of the members have conformed, while others dare not question it. But the female protagonists who rebelled and left it with the men of their choice are the ones who return and take in the spirit of the house. They are influenced by the house in such a way that they become better equipped to face the world after imbibing its values.

In Chapter I, "Dwelling in the Text", a detailed description of the houses in the various novels is provided. A reading of these novels gives a clear picture of the various rooms to such an extent that sketches have been drawn and accommodated in the last pages of the thesis. The novelist, a skillful story teller, has the rooms clear in her mind as she created her characters around it. All the houses have a family history, with memories trapped within their walls. It is the same archetypal house that pervades all her novels, the basic structure being the same, though there are minor variations in the arrangements of the rooms to fit the different fictional locale. This archetype is reminiscent of the ancestral house of Shashi Deshpande in Pune. Shashi Deshpande, in a personal interview given at her residence in Bangalore, explained the history of this maternal house, giving a detailed description of the house. She confided that she dreamed of this house as she ventured

into one of her first novels, Roots and Shadows. She expressed her surprise at the prominent position that she had given to the ancestral houses in her novels, something which she had not done intentionally. Some mysterious power has motivated the author to place the main door of the ancient house to the south facilitating the probable elimination of the male heir. The famous vastu expert, Sri Kanipayyoor Krishnan Namboodiripad, after studying the sketch of the house, with the front door facing south, has given his valuable opinion that, according to his shastra, the house faces 'kulanagam', a condition where there is no male to carry forward the line of inheritance. It is interesting to note that the family tradition of the ancestral house in the novels of Shashi Deshpande is carried forward by woman, subverting the ideology of a male child being the beacon bearer of the family heritage. The recurring theme of the incapacitated male paving the way for the female to shoulder the responsibility of the family house can be seen as a reflection of the discontent in the mind of the author, the discontent at excluding the woman from carrying forward the heritage of the family. It is evident that the women in these novels are disturbed that they do not count when it comes to property inheritance. The indignant words of Jaya in TLS, at the

absence of women in the family tree, carries echoes of the feelings of the author. For, Jaya observes, “What about the kakis and Ai? They married into this family, did’nt they, why are they not here? And what about Ajji, who, single handedly kept the family together, why isn’t she here?” (TLS 143). Neither in the house in which she is born nor in the house to which she is married does she have a place in the family tree. Home is a woman’s arena where she has played an inevitable role from time immemorial. The family, even if it is patriarchal, has always had woman as the silent but powerful force behind it. It is worth remembering Bernard Shaw’s *Candida*, in the play named after her. She is a clear headed and morally courageous woman who is guided by commonsense and reason. She says, “I build a castle of comfort and indulgence and love for him, and stand sentinel always to keep little vulgar cares out. I make him master here, though he does not know it” (Shaw 233). It may be argued that a woman does so because the very idea of a house is conceived for her sake. It is in her interest that the house remains. So she makes way for the male. But this cannot be made into an excuse for denying her of her rights. For, man is also dependent on the house because he will not be the ‘master’ without it. There cannot be any patriarchal family line without

the house. A woman has a right in the scheme of things and it cannot be got without assertion by her. It is the absence of a will for it that is the cause of the woman's plight. She has to change. In the contemporary world, it is no longer possible for the woman to remain passive.

The attitudes of characters, in the novels under consideration, to the ancestral house naturally vary. Indu, in whose hands Akka leaves all the property decides to sell the house. When the moment of final parting with the familial house comes, Indu, becomes very emotional and is flooded with memories of her past life spent in the house. The house itself seems to sense that its end is near and so waits for its final day. The house in AMT has a sense of expectancy about it, as if it is waiting for something. One cannot help wondering whether it had a premonition of the tragedy that was to befall on the family. It has a deep identification of some of the characters with the house. They and the house are inseparably intertwined so that we feel one does not exist without the other. The family members living in the ancestral house in RS share different relationships with the house. For women with an irresponsible husband, the house is a refuge. Most of the rooms, in these houses, are unused but they carry with it

memories of the past. Each room seems to have absorbed the feelings and undisclosed emotions of the occupants who occupied it once upon a time. The furniture is the same, even their position in each room is unchanged. The ticking of the old grandfather clock seems to give a heartbeat to these structures. They represent a tradition and also a life that is past. Though they may remain neglected, they never cease to influence the family members. Sripathi's identification with the isolated room on top of The Big House is worth mentioning. He has deliberately distanced himself from the family and is leading a lonely existence in the single room upstairs. He has found solace in that lone room when he withdraws from the other family members. For him, there is no survival without it. Unlike Kaka, in RS, he does not have to suffer any separation from it, since he dies suddenly in an accident. Kaka has a deeper bonding with the ancestral house and suffers when the house is demolished. Akka's father's sister Atya, who is born and brought up in that house had a deep affection for it. She is a childless widow and the house is her only security. She wishes to breathe her last there. The house becomes a kind of refuge for some, like Sunanda, who has an irresponsible husband. She lives there with her little children. Indu's uncle Kaka has a deep bonding

with the house. The house gives him security and confidence and the demolishing of the house affect him very badly. These minor characters in the novel provide a kind of foil to the more dominant ones. In AMT, Kalyani shares a deep bonding with her cousin sister Goda. They are united in their nostalgia about the origin of the family house. The huge monumental structure, The Big House is the centre of envy and admiration of all. Kalyani is very proud of her family history and is never tired of narrating the story of the finding of the Ganesha idol. The house seems to come alive in her presence. In SR, the singer Savithribhai cuts away all her roots when she decides to live with the muslim tabla player. Whether she is successful in effacing all memories of her past life is doubtful. She still retains her family pride and carefully avoids all conversation about her past when she talks to Madhu, who is writing her biography. This deliberate and conscious glorifying of the present and evading of the past shows her sensitive awareness of her past family background. Her life in her ancestral home has been suppressed and lies hidden at the subconscious level. But it is clear that her words and actions are motivated by it as she narrates her story to Madhu.

In Chapter II, "The Resurgent Woman", an analysis has been

made of the female protagonists, who had initially rebelled against the traditions of the house, but return to become the powerful heirs to these ancient structures. It is evident that the house instills power in them, nurturing them with its maternal qualities, enveloping them in its warmth when they experience dissatisfaction in the nuclear home. The female protagonists of the 'castles' of Shashi Deshpande are under the spell of their ancestral dwellings whether they live in harmony with it or not. A closer look reveals that the house is the feminine unconscious itself, a space of repressed female psyche. This repressed female psyche shared by women lead to a unique female bonding. The great house seems to share its complicity with the women, bringing them together as a semiotic female community, the *lesbian continuum*, which according to Adrienne Rich, is the sharing of a 'rich inner life' by women. It is akin to the contentment that is experienced by the infant in an all encompassing imaginary relationship with the mother. The atmosphere that pervades these houses keeps the Symbolic Order or the Law of the Father in the periphery. This 'rich inner experience' which is created within the walls of the ancient house seems to be shared by the author too. The house representing the feminine unconscious carries the archetype of the Vastu Purusha (or is it Shakti?)

who seems to fulfill the desires of the woman, conferring on her the justice that she seeks. In these novels it is the female community of the ancestral home that defines the woman's role. Here woman is not an object, a guarantor of the survival of the male hereditary line, which makes her identity and social role male constructed. The family tradition here is carried forward by the woman since it is she who becomes heir to the family house where she is born. In each of the novels, the female protagonist rebels against the house of her birth. She marries and leaves in protest but returns after ten to fifteen years to the same place to shoulder the responsibility of becoming the heir. The cherished family relationships inside the house give her a different perspective of life. She becomes drawn to the maternal influence of house. Towards the end the protagonist is more confident as an individual after imbibing the values from the house of her birth. She cannot brook the unjust claim of heirship to her house by anybody based on the fact that the person happens to be a man, that being the practice of a patriarchal society. It is this sense of revolt that assumes the form of desire for the death of male heir which is present in the unconscious of not only the protagonist but also of the other female characters of the novels. Hence she finds no compunction in taking

over the reins of the house when the time comes. Her emergence to power is coupled with the destruction of the sexual hierarchy and she is no more the “second sex”. The extra marital relationship promoted by the *lesbian continuum* of the ancestral house is attached to no sense of shame or guilt. It is no more a sign of woman’s surrender. Here it is she who becomes more powerful gaining access to a primeval energy shattering the man. Sexuality, which is considered by feminists like Catherine Mackinnon and Kate Millet as the key to men’s domination of women, here becomes a tool to overthrow the male heir and to bring the woman into power. The death wish in the mind of the female protagonist is a universal wish in women for the destruction of patriarchy which, in turn, would lead to gender equality. The revolutionary act of sex thus wins for her the house.

In Chapter III, “The Extinct Law of the Father”, the men in the novels are discussed. In a patriarchal society, the Law of the Father, representing the Oedipal Law is accepted as the Law of Society. In the Lacanian concept, the phallus is the master signifier, in the face of which the feminine can be defined only as lack. So in a patriarchal society, woman is a silence repressed in the unconscious. It is this semiotic unconscious that pervades the ancestral homes in the novels

of Shashi Deshpande, relegating the Law of the Father to the periphery. Nancy Chodorow, in The Reproduction of Mothering, stresses the importance of the mother-daughter bond. She emphasises that there is a stronger bond between the mother and daughter than between mother and son. The sons distance themselves from the mother to develop a 'masculine' sense of self, by identifying themselves with the father. So they move out of the unconscious semiotic bonding. This does not happen in the case of daughters, and so they have flexible ego boundaries, helping them to relate to others much better than men. This is why the men in the novels of Shashi Deshpande are not able to relate to the femininity of the ancestral home. They have moved away from their mother, to abide by The Law of the Father. Hence, in these novels, the men appear weak and helpless, unable to imbibe the values of the house. Another significant point that has been discussed is the 'death' of the male heir. The grand old structures in these novels do not have a male heir though these solid houses have been evidently built "by a man not just for himself, but for his sons and son's sons" (AMT 3). It is ironic that it is the woman who becomes heir to all the houses in these novels though such a situation is brought about due to some misfortune that befalls the male heir

The 'death' of the male heir has been analysed using Julia Kristeva's concept of the semiotic and the symbolic in psychology as well as language. The woman is denied her due position in society as well as language by making her an object and not the subject of symbolic discourse. According to her, the semiotic is always present as the subtext of symbolic discourse, emerging to disrupt the 'surface' meaning. Thus it is possible to see the 'death' of the male heir as the manifestation of the discontent in the author's psyche at the gender inequality prevalent in society. By challenging gender stereotypes through her fiction, Shashi Deshpande leads the reader to a rethinking of the conventional representation of women's personality and identity. It is a question of dignity that she is respected as a person and given a status equal to men in the family line.

In Chapter IV, The 'Homecoming', the return of the female protagonist to the ancestral house, after ten to fifteen years of married life, is looked into. These women, who left the house in protest seem to be stifled by the closed domesticated nuclear family which urges them to return to the collective existence of the ancestral home after years of married life. This return, which excludes the husband, gives them the longed for space to reflect upon their life allowing room for

a thorough introspection. It is interesting that the prosperous nuclear life with all material comforts allows no space for expansion for a woman, beyond the socially allotted roles of wife and mother, whereas the relaxed atmosphere in the ancestral house helps her gain certain existential insights into the plight of women and her gender. It is here that she comes to realize that her mother was also a victim of patriarchy who could see her daughter only as someone to be married off. The girl child, seen as a burden, created a strained relationship between the mother and daughter, urging the female protagonist to break away from tradition to marry men of her choice in the hope of attaining happiness. But this act of rebellion, which makes her feel victorious in the beginning, fails to instill contentment in her, making her return to the parental house on some pretext or other. This homecoming becomes a journey towards re-enforcing the mother daughter bond, a return to the womb. As rightly observed by Nancy Chodorow, women seek intimacy by recreating the symbiotic bond that they enjoyed with their mother. It is interesting that though, in these novels, the mother or mother surrogate is dead, their absence in no way hinders their union. In fact their bodily presence is not necessary since the dark interiors of the familial structure representing the feminine

unconscious facilitate the coming together of the mother and daughter through the memories trapped within the walls. This blurring of ego boundaries plays a crucial role in the life of the female protagonist in reconstructing an identity for herself. The nuclear home with its pre-structured codes of social and sexual behaviour stands for the symbolic order whereas the ancestral home, with its maternal nourishing qualities stands for the feminine semiotic.

The union of the rebels with the ancestral house is symbolised in the form of a sexual relationship. An act of extramarital sex which the house facilitates represents resistance against patriarchy since patriarchal civilization recognizes the right of the male to sexual freedom while woman is restricted to marriage. Simone de Beauvoir expresses a more or less same view. For she remarks:

The sexual act, if not sanctified by the code, by a sacrament, is for her a fault, a fall, a defeat, a weakness. She should defend her virtue, her honour, if she 'yields', if she 'falls' she is scorned; whereas any blame visited upon her conqueror is mixed with admiration. (Beauvoir 395)

But the semiotic world of the ancestral house in Shashi

Deshpande's novels does not allow the woman to suffer for her extramarital sexual act. Margaret Atwood's Penelopiad, which is a playful retelling of the myth of Odysseus, is worth remembering here. Odysseus returns to his home kingdom of Ithaca after twenty years and slaughters the suitors of Penelope, and hangs twelve of the maids of Penelope for sleeping with the suitors. Odysseus is a representative of patriarchy which negates the freedom of woman. The telling of it has been given to Penelope who explains that the maids were 'raped without permission' (Atwood 146), ironically enough, the permission of their master Odysseus. Understanding one's own body is a step forward towards self identity. In RS, Indu has a sexual relationship with her cousin Naren, who is the black sheep of the family. It is a fulfilling experience for Indu, with no guilt attached. She is able to view it as something very personal, having nothing to do with her relationship with her husband, Jayant. She is composed and she decides not to tell Jayant anything. Naren meets with a sudden death by drowning in the temple tank. Similarly, in TDHT, Saru, for a moment, secretly imagines seducing Madhav, a college student who is staying in her ancestral house. But the moment passes and the idea is immediately dismissed as it would be defiling

innocence. In SR too the protagonist shares a few confused moments when Hari tries to touch and console her. There is only a vague suggestion, but Madhu, in a bout of hysteria, pushes him away, though later she analyses it as only the touch of compassion. There is also another instance where Madhu, at the age of fifteen happened to have a sexual relationship with a man much senior to her. He was her father's friend, a painter who came to her ancestral house to comfort her when her father was dying. She was greatly comforted by the closeness of his body when he held her tight to stop the convulsive sobs. But then, as if an ancient memory was directing her body's responses she became aware of the pleasure as their bodies came together in union. This incident became irrelevant since her father's death blotted out everything else. It was only years later that she comes to know that he was the illegitimate son of her grand father and that he committed suicide. In all these cases, the man either dies or disappears after the sexual union. He is merely an instrument by which the woman achieves a greater fulfillment. There is no emotional attachment in these cases. In MO, Manjeri gets her sex on order and dismisses Raman without any compunction when her needs are met. It is different from a masculine point of view where the woman is

discarded after the man has enjoyed her physically. In all these cases the act has a kind of purging effect soothing a mentally disturbed mind. The sexual union in the above mentioned cases has no guilt attached and can be viewed as a kind of self discovery, making the person more real and complete. The protagonist becomes one with the family, through the union.

Human beings are social creatures and will congregate into social groupings naturally and spontaneously. Shashi Deshpande herself says that there is a universal human instinct to connect with other human beings. We seem to sense that we are not complete in ourselves and that we are part of a larger entity. The different family members living under the same roof find comfort in such an existence, though they may have their own reasons for staying there. Some members of the family remain in the ancestral house due to helplessness, some revolt, while some are in harmony with the spirit of the house. Whatever be the reasons, there is a cohesive force which binds them together, with the house providing an enveloping warmth around them. At the same time, one cannot help noticing the fact that houses represent a female world rather than a male world. Though it cannot be denied that the male members too have an affinity towards

the house, Shashi Deshpande is more successful in exploring the female consciousness of these ancestral houses. The house brings the women together through celebrations like Chaitra Gowri Haldi kumkum, the first pregnancy of a woman, the wearing of green sari and green bangles, and occasions like childbirth and postnatal care. Vijaya Guttal observes that the description of these celebrations become celebrations of woman's specificity. She notes:

Though this appears to conform to the concept of the biological 'inner space' of the female structured by childbearing and homemaking and nurturance, yet the fictional construct does not stop there but extends to include female psychological 'inner' space as well which is developed in a bid for establishing the specific identity of womanhood. (Guttal 172)

To extend the inner space by a logical method to the interiors of the traditional houses need not be a far fetched process. It is a structuring developed in the course of the evolution of life on earth. The ancestral houses are also a part of that evolution leaving an impression on the human psyche in the form of a powerful archetype. Women live that experience in their mind and body. In the same way

the gay celebrations of women described by Shashi Deshpande evoke the unconscious memories of communal celebrations in the ancient societies where the 'totem' animal was ceremoniously killed for food and shared by all. Freud gives accounts of these in his book Totem and Taboo. It is a matter of consolation that at least women can relive these experiences in the novels of our author. This is because of the fact that her body itself is the archetype.

In the case of *The Big House* in AMT, the big solid structure seems to come alive when Sumi and her three daughters come to stay there. Shripathi is merely a titular head, while Kalyani, his wife can be said to be a more successful character. She too returns to her ancestral home as a deserted wife. The oppressive silence of Shripathi, her husband, does not destroy her. Instead of becoming a broken woman, she has taken life in its stride involving herself in all family matters with a kind of sincerity and cheerfulness that endears herself to the readers. Her daughter Sumi and her three daughters too are engaged in a lot of activities. The house seems to embody the consciousness of the characters who occupy it. The strong ties of family relationships are part of women's experience of their selves. The concept of self is partly constructed through many of these

relations. The women in the family share a deep bonding among themselves. They could relate to each other far better than how men related to each other and the house seems to bestow the much needed mothering effect on them. Kalyani, though initially shocked to know that Sumi's husband Gopal had deserted her, later reconciles to it and helps them in all their activities. It is interesting to note that towards the end, after Sumi and her father die in an accident, the daughters do not seem to need their father. They still love him a lot but they do not expect him to stay even though they have lost their mother. The Big House belonged to Kalyani, as they find from her husband's will. This seems to strengthen Kalyani, as is evident from the way she comforts Gopal, telling him that she will always be in the house along with her three grand daughters. As Gopal leaves, he carries with him the memory of the two figures Kalyani and Aru, standing proudly in front of The Big House. In BV, a woman's vision of life is expressed through the consciousness of Urmila, the female protagonist and also through the consciousness of other female characters like Vanna, Urmila's friend Mira, the mother-in-law, and Shakutai. Mira's poems and diary are discovered from her house, years after her death. Shashi Deshpande, is able to relate to the female characters in the novels.

She is a feminist writer in the sense that she is able to explore the feminine psyche of these characters. The rebels in the novels of Shashi Deshpande feel that they have gone a step back into childhood as they enter the ancestral house, which makes the house a symbol of the past. Moreover the emotional bonding between the rebels and the house is so strong that time and space seem to lose their precision when they come together. Though men too have an emotional bonding with the house, it is the women in these novels who are sympathised by it. The house seems to acquire a feminine consciousness since the female characters are the ones who embody the spirit of the house in these novels. Thus the ancestral homes in the novels of Shashi Deshpande, are sympathetic towards their inhabitants and play a significant role in shaping the destiny of the family members. The sexual act of an extra marital kind promoted by the ancestral house is allied to another theme—that of a return to the womb in search of solace. The protagonist who returns to the ancestral house has the characteristics of a medieval knight setting off in search of the Holy Grail. In fact the natal home of the heroine exercises a power over her to initiate her into this quest.

A critical analysis of the novels taken up for study in this thesis

is given below so that the arguments may be followed more easily.

In The Dark Holds no Terrors [TDHT], Sarita returns to her parental home after fifteen years of married life. She had initially rebelled against her dominating mother who showed preference for her younger brother Dhruva. Later Dhruva had drowned in a pool of water and the mother accuses Sarita of killing the boy. Saru is filled with guilt which reduces her sense of self worth. There is no sharing of grief, which would have lessened her burden and led to recovery. The relationship between Saru and her mother subverts all conventional expectations of the role of mother and daughter. Dhruva's loss is the death of a male child, a disruption in the continuity of lineage, and a constant reminder of mortality without any hope of redemption. The traumatic childhood of pain, rejection and alienation wounds her psyche and she leaves her orthodox Brahmin family to stay in a hostel to study medicine and then to marry Manu, a man belonging to a lower caste. She acquires material prosperity and success in career but all this fail to instil happiness in her. Manu becomes a sexual sadist and life becomes intolerable. In the meanwhile her mother dies of cancer, never calling on her daughter, who is a doctor. After the death of her mother, she comes to her parental home

to visit her father, who has Madhav, a college student staying with him for company. He reminded her of Dhruva and she had the same feeling of jealousy towards him, but later she overcomes these feelings when she nurses him back to health when he falls ill. The stay in the quiet old house slowly helps her to confront all her terrors and conquer them. She is able to understand her dead mother, who was also a victim of patriarchy with an unhappy childhood, as a girl child in her own house. She returns to Manu deciding to be herself instead of blaming either her mother or her husband for all the miseries in life. She becomes confident that she would do her duty as a doctor by being of service to humanity.

In Roots and Shadows [RS], Indu responds to the summons of Akka, the family matriarch and comes back to the old family house to find herself the inheritor of the family property. Indu had stayed away from the house for ten years pursuing her studies in Bombay and later marrying Jayant, a man of her choice. The only two people who attended the marriage were her father Govind and his elder brother Kaka. Akka disapproved of this rebel daughter, a child born out of an intercaste union, a child who had lost her mother at birth and had been brought to the ancestral home when barely fifteen days old. Indu

had rebelled against Akka, the stern disciplinarian and left home, promising never to return. This rebel, who was disowned and disapproved of is suddenly summoned back to be handed over money and power. A woman being chosen as the heir to the ancestral property, overlooking the possible male heirs is symbolic of the shift in gender roles. The legacy becomes the tribute of one strong woman to another, instilling strength and confidence, imparting a feeling of belonging to the family. Back in the old house, she interacts with the different family members, sharing an affinity with the women, the motif of unfulfilled desires become the theme binding her to them. This makes her sympathise with Akka, who had a terrible past of marital rape at the age of thirteen. It had been an unequal marriage where a child bride is tagged on to a man much older than her, the man oblivious to the trauma of the child. After suffering in the hands of an insensitive mother-in-law and a lecherous husband, she had to nurse this man when he suffered a stroke and became bedridden. She had returned to her parental home which readily gave her the much needed solace. Akka's inheritance was acquired through a lot of suffering and anguish and she somehow felt it right to bestow it on Indu. The homecoming becomes essential for Indu's growth, the sexual encounter with her

cousin Naren becoming a part of self knowing. After settling the family members by selling the house, she decides to return to her husband.

Jaya is the protagonist and the narrative voice in That Long Silence [TLS], who comes to the Dadar flat with her husband Mohan. Mohan was involved in a money scandal at the office and they come here temporarily to escape from it. Jaya is the mother of two children and a writer in a popular magazine. They make a retreat to the unfashionable suburb of Bombay to avoid intrusion and to seek anonymity. This change of scene is welcomed secretly by Jaya, whose life had been an unending monotony. The Dadar flat gives her the privacy to make an introspection of her life. The fact that she had inherited the flat was a secret she had not revealed to Mohan. With her children with relatives, no electric gadgets to rule her life and nothing to be cleaned and polished, time seems to stand still in this place. She becomes extremely sensitive to people around her which brings in memories of various people like Kamat, a man of artistic sensibility who plays an important role in her life, Mohan's father and mother, Jaya's father and mother and uncles and aunts, Kusum, Nayana, Tara, Mukta and others. Towards the end of the novel, Jaya

develops a fully evolved consciousness which marks the beginning of a new life, different from the selves into which she was trying to mould herself. She refuses to succumb to any prescribed role model which would inhibit her life.

In The Binding Vine [BV], the agony of the death of her baby daughter Anusha, seems to motivate Urmila to reach out to other women around her who have their own tales of misery. Urmila's husband Kishore is away at sea since he is in the Merchant Navy. She has spent her childhood not with her parents but with her grandparents and her roots lie elsewhere in the Ranidurg House where she grew up with Baiajji and Aju. After Baiajji's death, the young teenager looked after her aged grandfather. Later, he committed suicide by hanging himself. The Ranidurg House holds memories for her and Balkaka, the grandson of her great grandfather's mistress is a family member for her. Later, after losing her baby daughter, she constantly reviews women's roles-her mother's and her grandmother's. Urmila is drawn to Shakutai and her young daughter Kalpana, who is brutally raped and is lying unconscious, and Mira her own dead mother-in-law who had to suffer rape in marriage. Mira died while giving birth to her son Kishore and Kishore's father marries Akka, the woman who replaced

her as her husband's second wife and who is Vanaa's mother. Urmila reconstructs the story of Mira's life from her poems and diaries which were discovered from a dark corner of the house. The suffering which surfaces through the poems helps Urmila in forging a unique relationship with not only Mira, but many other women in the novel leading to a feminine solidarity. Urmila, towards the end, undergoes a healing process and she makes plans to publish Mira's poems.

A Matter of Time [AMT] weaves an intricate pattern of relationships within an extended family spanning across generations, with the ancestral house, known as The Big House, providing the arena for the human drama to unfold. The house is named 'Vishwas' symbolising trust. It is also the name of the ancestor who built the house. The house is occupied by Kalyani and her husband Shripati who have had no communication with each other for the past thirty years, after they lost their son. Kalyani's mother Manorama resents the birth of Kalyani as she wanted a son. She forces a marriage between two unwilling partners, her daughter Kalyani and her younger brother Shripati. Two daughters, Sumi and Premi are born to them and then a son, who turns out to be mentally retarded. This boy is lost at a busy railway station and Shripati blames Kalyani for losing the boy. He

deserts his wife, but Manorama brings him back, hurriedly building a single room upstairs for him. Though Shripati comes back to stay there, he stops talking to his wife, intending to inflict a punishment on her for losing the boy, the male heir to the family. Later, Sumi, along with her three daughters comes to stay with them when Sumi is deserted by her husband Gopal. Gopal has an unexplained existential drive which makes him leave his happy family and go in quest for the self. Sumi accepts Gopal's decision placidly because she knows the futility of remonstrations. Instead of wallowing in pity, she becomes economically independent, immerses herself in gardening and writes plays, in an attempt to discover herself. Kalyani, Sumi and her three daughters keep themselves busy, having Goda, Kalyani's sister and Premi and their families around them in the house. Later Sumi and her father Shripati are killed in an accident. After the initial shock of bereavement, Kalyani is fortified with the knowledge that she is the inheritor of The Big House when Shripati's will is read out to her. As the novel ends, Kalyani stands proudly in front of The Big House with her three granddaughters while Gopal leaves for Alaknanda on his endless wanderings.

In Small Remedies [SR], Madhu comes to Bhavanipur and stays with Hari and Lata to record the life and experiences in the biography

of Savitribai Indorekar, the doyen of Hindustani music of the Gwalior gharana. Madhu has accepted this offer because she has to get away temporarily from her Bombay flat and her husband, not only from the agonising memories of her son's death but also from the bitterness seeping into her marriage. Savitribai had rebelled against her husband and left home to learn music under a Guru and was living with her Muslim tabla player, Gulam Saab. She was estranged from her daughter. The communal violence that stirred up as political revenge after Babri Masjid's demolition claims Savitribai's daughter Munni and so also Madhu's son, Adit. Both the bereaved mothers go through pain but while Savitribai maintains silence, Madhu blames the male ego of her husband, which traumatised the boy and sent him to his death. It is significant to know why Madhu blames her husband. Years after marriage, when Adit is almost seventeen, Madhu tells her husband Som of her first sexual experience at the young age of fifteen. Som is shocked beyond words at the 'adultery' and wants her to condemn it as rape, which would prove her innocence in the act. But Madhu refuses to yield to his allegations of infidelity. Adit had left home in disgust after a noisy scene between his parents and it was then that he was killed in a bomb blast in the bus. There is another

factor that torments Madhu. She comes to know that the man with whom she had a sexual encounter was her grandfather's illegitimate son and that he had committed suicide by hanging himself. It is to get away from these traumatic experiences that she takes up the assignment and comes to Bhavanipur. Though Savitribai never speaks of her daughter Munni, Madhu is able to identify with her concealed grief, as she too had lost her son in the same bomb blast. While reconstructing the story of the great singer, Madhu becomes aware of the power of words, as she could recreate the singer in the frame she wishes to design for her. The power of the writer is the power of the creator and the knowledge strengthens her to face life.

The latest novel Moving On [MO], has Manjari alias Jiji as the central character, who remembers her happy childhood with her father Baba who is a doctor, her mother Vasu and little sister Malu, the four of them forming a 'Baba-Mai-Malu-and-I' entity. Disharmony seeps into this utopian existence when Jiji falls in love with Shyam, a photographer who comes to take their family photo. Jiji is not only excited but exhibits her passion for him openly which irritates Mai, who is a very reserved person. Jiji has her own way and marries him spending the most beautiful days of her life in the seaside villa, the

Ocean Vista. She gives birth to a boy, Anand, but in the meanwhile she experiences the shock of betrayal when her unmarried sister Malu becomes pregnant by Shyam. Malu gives birth to a baby girl, Sachi and dies in childbirth. Shyam too meets his death by drowning. Estranged from her parents, Jiji has to grapple with innumerable problems in an attempt to survive with her baby son. After the death of her parents, she stays in the old house which Baba had given to Sachi. She goes through Baba's diary unlocking the past, recollecting old memories and recasting events. She feels that Baba is trying to convey a message by bestowing the house to Sachi, that of the need to forget and forgive the past, in order to move on in life. The stay in the ancestral house becomes a trying one when she gets anonymous phone calls from the mafia underworld subjecting her to psychological pressure to coerce her into selling the house. She is even physically assaulted to make her give in. But she fights boldly to protect the house from property sharks. In the meanwhile she satisfies her bodily need for sex by sleeping with her tenant Raman, a much younger man. She turns down her cousin Raja's proposal to marry her because, though she was fond of him, she did not love him. She could not accept marriage only as a means of social security and so decides not

to get into marriage again.

Come Up and Be Dead [CUBD] is a psychological thriller, slightly different from the other novels of Shashi Deshpande. But it contains within it several ideas which are present in her other novels. Moreover, the temporal flow of the past into the present, making the characters re-examine their ancestral home and childhood environment seems to be a constant concern for the writer. The setting is a girls school, where Kshama, the protagonist is the efficient schoolmistress. But even she is not able to deal with the suicide of a schoolgirl, which is followed by two more deaths, which creates panic among the people there who fear that there is some foul play. Even Kshama's own brooding and slightly mysterious brother Prathap is suspected, who dies mysteriously as a result of a fall from a ladder. After an attempted murder, Devyani, the cousin and housekeeper of Kshama, suspects a conspiracy behind it all and deciding to put an end to it, accepts an invitation to come up and be dead. She traps the murderer and is dramatically rescued by the police inspector. The deaths are related to a call girl racket ingeniously set up and run by those inside and those on the outer fringes of the school. The town's good doctor Girish was in it, immensely profiting from these girls. Mr. Varma, a member

of the school's board of governors is responsible for luring the unsuspecting girls into selling their bodies. Kshama and Devyani frequently recollect their past, though these reflections are in no way related to the main plot. Later Devyani makes a retreat to the natal home - a psychological return to the 'womb'.

# Dwelling in the Text

Preetha M.M “The place of ancestral homes in the development of the female self as seen in the novels of Shashi Deshpande” Thesis. Department of English, University of Calicut, 2007

## Chapter I

### Dwelling in the Text

We have seen that the characters in the novels of Shashi Deshpande have a common family experience which is symbolised in the form of the house. This influence has been explained as archetypal in terms of Jungian philosophy in the last chapter. Now we shall try to look at the influence from the point of view of the Indian Vastu Shastra. This shastra or science is an ancient one mixed as such with a mythological belief. It has its own rationale and system which aim at providing a method of planning and construction of a dwelling so as to connect man to his environment and help him to achieve harmony with nature. Its principles are formulated on the basis of the influence of the sun, its light and heat, the direction of the wind, the position of the moon, the earth's magnetic field etc. According to Vastu Shastra, the five elements, space, air, fire, water and earth are related to man's five senses of hearing, touching, seeing, tasting and smelling. The principles of Vastu are concerned with the arrangement and balancing of these five elements in their proper order and proportions for the construction of the house so that human beings can have better living conditions. The house is placed on the Vastu Purusha mandala

according to certain rules. This is the place where the Vastu Purusha lies. It is believed that every plot has a Vastu Purusha whose blessings have to be invoked when constructing a house. The house should be built in such a way that Vastu Purusha is pleased. He is the presiding deity who showers blessings on the house and its inmates. According to ancient mythology the Vastu Purusha was a blood thirsty giant who was creating problems in the three worlds. In order to conquer him, the various deities representing several directions sat on his back making it impossible for him to get up. The helpless giant prayed to God who appeared before him in the North east corner and blessed him. Thus he came to be known as Vastu Purusha and the place where he lies is the Vastu Mandala. Ancient sages believed that this Demi God, resides in each and every plot, house or building. A sacrificial tantric rite is performed, just before the construction of a building, to satisfy the Vastu Purusha. It consists of invoking Brahma, the creator, to be present in the chest of the Vast Purusha, empanel superhuman powers like vayu (air) varuna (ocean) agni (fire) antariksha (atmosphere), spirits and demons into various limbs of his body after propitiating them and thus calm down the Vastu Purusha, so as to make the site suitable for construction. The building should be

constructed in such a manner that certain points, believed to be the nerves of the Vastu Purusha are not hurt.

The Indian tradition is filled with symbols and parables to help the individual comprehend the vastness of reality. Myths and legends are built around gods and goddesses so that people connect the ordinary actions of their everyday life with the profound movements and meanings of the gods. This lifts the individual spirit to another level of consciousness. In this context, the Vastu Purusha himself becomes an archetypal symbol of the house. The structure of the house that we deal with is the manifested form of the Vastu Purusha. If there are inadequacies in the construction, it might bring about health or psychological problems in the inhabitants. The indwelling spirit has to be pleased in order to bring about an all round development of personality. Human beings live amidst other natural forms and are in touch with energies and elements that are perceptible and beyond perception. They are all connected by space, time and energy. The house is a part of a large ecosystem. It follows that if there should be balance and harmony in nature, the house should be designed according to the principles of Vastu Shastra. The interconnection between the building, people and environmental energies has to be

taken into consideration. It is only then that the consciousness of the occupants can be raised to a higher level. The fundamental emotions and family memories of the inhabitants of Shashi Deshpande's ancient houses can also be explained in terms of the influence of Vastu Purusha on these inmates. The vastu Purusha represents the soul of the structures in the novels of Shashi Deshpande, giving them life and energy. Hence the Indian concept of a house is also the representation of a psychical or mental reality. It springs from the deep social unconscious of human beings. The Vastu Purusha, acting as a powerful archetypal force, has its hold on its inmates even though they may live far away from the house. This force acts on the consciousness of the family members without they themselves being aware of it.

The solidarity of the house in AMT proclaims the fact that it was built to endure. The same holds true of the Ranidurg house in BV, with its huge porch and lofty pillars, the buttressed terrace above, the huge front door with canopied windows. The physical structure has a masculinity about it. The house in RS was built by Indu's great grandfather. The open courtyards capture light and air and bring them into the house. The woodwork is beautiful with massive and heavily carved doors. The house in AMT is described vividly, right from the

trees in the compound to the different rooms. It is a very big and solid structure called Vishwas, named after an ancestor who came down south with the Peshwa's invading army and established the family there. The house seems to proclaim the meaning of its name by its very presence, its solidity. It is noteworthy for the simplicity of design. The ornamentation, which was so common in the time in which it was built is not seen in this house. Except for the two delicately fluted columns that hold up the porch, it is just a bare square facade which gave no room for dilapidation. The writer describes the house as having a schizophrenic quality about it. A long passage running along the length of the house divides it into two with an almost mathematical accuracy. The rooms on the left are dark and brooding because they are uninhabited for years. The rooms on the right are too large to be cosy but has a lived-in look. An L-shaped veranda running from the back of the house is a workplace where it enclosed the kitchen, storeroom and bathroom. The smaller arm is not only the family entrance but also their sitting room. When Sumi and her three girls move into this house, Sumi occupies a bedroom all alone, which was her grandfather's. He had lived and died in that room. All the extra furniture went to the small room next to Sumi's bedroom. But later

on she finds the room too large to be comfortable and so moves to the corner bedroom in the unused wing. With a writing table and a bed in it, it resembles a hostel room, but Sumi is happy in it. It is very quiet there since it is separated from the other wing by the staircase and so provided the ideal atmosphere to carry on with her writing. The massive front door always remains closed since the family uses the smaller arm of the L-shaped veranda as the entrance and sitting room. The front door opens into a small hall with a staircase that curves gracefully up into an unseen landing. Though the staircase raises expectations of an entire floor above, it actually has only one room which was added on later. From the outside it looks like an outgrowth, perched on top of the house, detracting from its main quality of integrity. Shripathi lives all alone in this room, distancing himself from the rest of the family. Gopal, after leaving Sumi and the children, stays in a small room above a printing press that belongs to his student. The living condition here is like the one he had when he lived in the outhouse of The Big house before marrying Sumi. He felt comforted by the fact that there is nothing in the room that is his. The press and the room are located in an old part of the town, where tiny lanes criss cross one another and homes, small shops and restaurants jostle

together in noisy existence.

The inspiration for the ancestral houses in the novels RS and SR comes from Shashi Deshpande's mother's house in Pune. She described the house in detail in a personal interview given at her residence at Bangalore. This old house held pleasant memories, with the family coming together here on holidays. It was a very huge structure bought in 1915, by her grandfather who was the eldest son in the family. The house stood in a very crowded area in Pune, in a narrow lane commonly called 'galli'. As one entered through the main door, there was a pond where people could wash their feet, before entering the house. Near the pond grew a champak tree which is so typical in her novels, the smell of whose flowers brings nostalgic memories. At the back was a cowshed and a garage. On the left was a huge courtyard with a palm tree in the center. It was on the raised platform around this that men sat down to chat. It is called 'osri,' which served as a kind of family room with wooden railings on the sides. From here you could watch people walking along the small road on the South East side. There was the women's room at the back where childbirth took place. It is in a dark room modelled on this that Indu stands all alone during Akka's funeral till she is comforted by

her aunt. Indu's grandfather had lived in that fictional house of the novel in the beginning. Her grand grandfather had built it, but he had died before he could live in it. Indu's grandfather had made extensions and renovations but because of his garish taste and love of solidity, there was an odd combination about the house. The beauty of the house lies in its open courtyards, bringing the light and air into the house and the beautiful woodwork. The doors are massive and heavily carved, while the floor-length windows have gracefully arched frames and delicate lattice work. The staircase is merely functional, just wooden stairs enclosed by dark and dingy walls.

There is a third large courtyard, separated from the second by an open corridor. The pond is at the centre with corridors on three sides. There are steps going down to the pond. It is here that women did their washing and men sometimes had a quick bath. There are a kitchen and bathroom at the back. It is half closed with railings on both sides. It is the part of the house where women used to chat with each other as they went through their daily chores. It is above this courtyard that the bedrooms are situated. It is in this bedroom that Indu, in RS, talks to her uncle and Savithribai, in SR, rests as she listens to the voices of the women. As Indu waits in this room for her

uncle to finish his exercise, she watches the morning sun streaming in through the windows. She can hear the pigeons cooing throatily at one another. Someone is washing clothes in the back courtyard with the sound of cloth slapping against the stone. The drops of water sprays into multicoloured fountains as they catch the sunlight. There is a large hall upstairs which is the library. Nobody does any serious reading here but men got together for serious discussion in this room. It is here that Indu meets her father after she returns to her ancestral house. Indu's uncle's wife's room is downstairs. It has cupboards of dark wood, trunks piled up in a corner and photographs lined up on the walls. This is where Indu and her cousin Mini snip away at the supari with a nutcracker as they discuss Mini's marriage. Shashi Deshpande's ancestral house, where she used to spend the holidays in her childhood days, is reflected in these houses as it had made a lasting impression on her mind. Though it is not exactly the writer's ancestral home that is described, the house remains in her subconscious mind and becomes the locale for her novels. It triggers her imagination and becomes the arena in which her characters enact their roles. She says that she even dreamt of the house when she started writing RS and it became the backdrop for the novel.

The house in SR where Madhu stays when she writes the biography of Savithribai, is a large but strange one. The many rooms that it contains are of the same shape and almost the same size, each one with shelves along the walls at shoulder height. The rooms are sparsely furnished and it is possible to make use of all the rooms which are suitable for any purpose. Savithri Bai, the singer, lives in a huge house in Bhavanipur, where Madhu goes to interview her. There are three ways of approaching the house. There is the main approach, along the road and through the non-existent front gate. There is another, the shortest route which involves entering from the back of the house and going past a disused well and the dilapidated remains of a row of rooms, which were once the servants quarters. The third way is the one which Madhu usually takes, stepping over the sagging barbed wire and going through the mango grove to the right of the house. The house is a little away from the town and is like an isolated castle. The owner is a man called Ravi Patil who had bought the bungalow when it had fallen into disuse. But nobody lived in it since his mother refused to move out of the ancestral home. Thus Ravi Patil, an admirer of Savithri Bai offered her the bungalow when she fell ill during her visit to Bhavanipur. Savithri Bai speaks about her

married home in great detail. It is huge like a palace with many rooms. There are latticed windows, courtyards with ponds and palm trees.

The Ranidurg House was gifted to Urmi's grandfather Aju by the Raja when his son, whom Aju tutored, graduated. It is evident that Aju was grateful and proud of this fact since the photograph of the Raja and his Rani were placed on the mantelpiece and Urmi was allowed to dust them once a month. She loved the day of cleaning, when she went with her grandmother Baiajji, opening all the windows which made the breeze set the chandelier tinkling. As a child she admired the house with its lofty pillars, buttressed terrace, the huge and massive front door that opened into a small drab hall which is a prelude to the grandeur of the durbar hall, as papa calls it. It is truly magnificent with its huge size, its high raftered ceiling, panelled walls and fireplace, its polished black and white tiled floor and the beautiful chandelier above. Urmi was not interested in Papa's and Inni's bedroom or the large dining room which was never used. She was eager to get to her domain which was a new extension where she lived with her grandparents. There is a long dark corridor which links the two parts of the house. The new extension had a hall with "a shabby sagging sofa and the ancient GEC radio enshrined on a high table" (BV 11). Urmi fondly remembers the dining room where she

spent most of the time with Baiajji, the table littered with Urmi's school books and Baiajji's letters and bits of paper on which she wrote her accounts. There are two identical rooms which is actually a big rectangular room divided by a wooden partition. One is Aju's room, neat and dull, with nothing interesting there. The other room, occupied by Urmi and Baiajji is cluttered with books but Urmi lovingly remembers that they never had to search for anything, they could find things even in the dark. Baiajji and Urmi shared a unique relationship, the house binding them together. Vanaa's house is close to Ranidurg House, the two houses separated by a thick hedge. Mira's house, the house into which she is married, is remembered through the memory of a visit to her place, where Urmi had sat in the hall. The rest of the house is constructed through the poems and diaries of Mira. Mira had died at childbirth but Urmi experiences going into the house with her, seeing the corner where women sat three long days, cut off from the rest of the family, looking out through the window on to the street, the window which she refers to as her companion for three days.

The flat in Dadar, where Jaya and her husband Mohan stay in order to temporarily escape from the money scandal in which Mohan is involved, acquires great importance in the novel TLS. It belongs to

Jaya's family and she can sense the feeling of ease and relaxation as she enters into it. There is a curious convoluted history to the flat which began with Jaya's eldest brother Dinkar. The flat was given to their mother by her brother, Makarandamama. She gave it to her son Dinkar and he gifted it to his sister Jaya. Dinkar believed that the flat belonged to their family and was part of it. Makarandamama had earned himself a bad name in the family by joining films. It was Jaya's father who helped him when he was rejected by the family. That must be the reason why the flat was given to Jaya's mother. Makarandamama had bought the flat very cheap from a Muslim actor, who had bought it for his Hindu mistress. He was in a hurry to leave for Pakistan before the partition. Mohan and Jaya come to live there temporarily to get away from the problems that Mohan was facing in the office. It is from this flat that Jaya remembers her home in Saptagiri, the town house where ajji (her paternal grandmother) lived and also Jaya's mother's house in Ambegaon. Jaya prefers the sitting room in her childhood home in Saptagiri. Ajji's room is bare except for a bed and two large wooden chairs. The sitting room is not much used, except to receive an occasional visitor. At all other times, the male visitors go to the office room and the women to the inner rooms, the walls of

which gleamed with oil where they rested their heads.

It is worthwhile to note that there is no modernization of these houses throughout the novel. They represent stability in a world of flux. If at all there has been any addition of rooms, they look incongruous as in the case of RS, where Indu's grandfather had made extensions and renovations which made the house look "like a good looking woman dressed in execrable bad taste" (RS 44). In AMT, there is just one room added on later but it looks like an excrescence perched on top of the house, detracting from its main quality of integrity. The nuclear family of the female protagonist is contrasted to the joint family of their ancestral homes. The modern home can be said to be efficient and practical but devoid of the higher dimensions of the ancient houses. 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. None of the family members make any attempt to bring modern amenities in order to make the living conditions better. They go through elaborate rituals of heating water to bathe using the copper boiler in the bathroom. They go through these chores in a relaxed manner so that as we read the novels, we

become aware of the slow pace of life in these homes. It is a refreshing and soothing change from the fast pace of life in the cities. Moreover the members do not want to spend money on the house since it is a joint set up. Such houses have to be ultimately demolished since the family members need their own share of money. Maintaining such houses is expensive and so they remain neglected. We notice that modernity creeps into the house unawares when Saru, in TDHT, starts cooking dal in a pressure cooker, much to the surprise and curiosity of her father and Madhav. She remembers how her mother used to get up at 4 o'clock in the morning on the days when she had to cook dal. But other than these minor alterations no change can be observed in these structures. These ancient houses are allowed to go the way of all flesh and die away. These eco-friendly structures would only make living better if they are combined with modern amenities. However in a joint family set up, where some of the family members do not stay there, it is not practically possible to bring changes. The relatives who do not stay there feel it a waste to spend money on the house. So ultimately they are left neglected. It is the circumstances and the people who live in it who determine the condition of the house. But the inhabitants in these ancient structures do not long for any change.

They continue with their lives preoccupied with their own routine activities. As far as the female protagonist is concerned, the ancestral house provides the ideal circumstances for her to begin a new cycle.

The structure of the different houses, as described in the novels and how they manage to take hold of the family members has been considered. The history behind these ancient houses help in enriching it, at the same time giving the house a new meaning and dimension. The contrast in atmosphere between the painfully furnished nuclear home and the relaxed untidiness of the ancestral home is an interesting feature. A study of the layout of the ancestral houses in these novels, point to the fact that all these houses have the same basic structural design. This structural design resides in the minds of all the female protagonists, including the author. The maternal house in the author's memory seems to merge with the houses in her novels. The clarity in the description of the houses in the various novels of Shashi Deshpande is evidence that the author has the structure deeply imprinted in her unconscious, which emanates into her consciousness to provide the locale for her fictional world. The significant position that the houses acquire in the novels has to be viewed taking into account that this house in Pune kept surfacing into her memory

haunting her as she ventured into one of her earliest novels, Roots and Shadows. It is the same archetype of the house that seems to pervade her novels, though there might be slight variations in the arrangement of rooms. It is the same archetype that is present in all her women characters. The author also confided that this house haunted her constantly while she was working on these novels. It is the archetype of this house which has motivated her in structuring the ancestral homes in her novels. The house called Vishwas in AMT and the old houses in RS and SR are not much different from the novelist's own maternal house in Pune. All these houses have a Maratha background suggested by the name Vishwas, this being the name of Kalyani's ancestral house. How the house came into existence is a tale all by itself with memories of Shivaji's warriors entering Karnataka. Vishwasrao, after whom the house is named, was one of their forefathers who had come down South to Karnataka with Madhavrao Peshwa leading an invading Maratha army. They had been camped on the banks of the river Kaveri. When Vishwasrao was bathing in the river, early in the morning, he happened to find a stone idol of Ganapati. Ganapati was the Peshwa's family deity. Incidentally the Marathas won the battle which they fought. Vishwasrao was asked

by the Peshwa to install the idol and was rewarded with a lot of land. Rao built a house there, in the village of Ganeshkhed, the family becoming powerful landlords and collectors of revenue for the region. Afterwards the family moved away from the village of Ganeshkhed to Bangalore, building a family house there.

This family house in Bangalore, The Big House, had a Ganapati idol installed in a niche just above the massive front door. Kalyani is full of enthusiasm when she speaks of this, 'the other Ganapati idol', discovered by her father Vithalrao. It seems that her father had a 'vision' which she considered as a family miracle. A stranger was seen to be working on a block of stone in the dark shaded grove of trees behind the family temple in Ganeshkhed. Instead of the block of stone, Vithalrao had seen the Ganapati idol in its place. He saw a vision of it in the niche above the front door of the house that he was building—a niche that he had not planned before. Vithalrao was asked to return three months later. The idol was ready by then. It was brought home and installed in the niche he had got ready by then. Kalyani religiously followed the tradition set by her mother, that of making a servant climb up a ladder to clean the idol and put some flowers on it.

The archetypal house in the novelist's mind is not the true

imitation of a structure as prescribed by a patriarchal value system and a shastra tailored to suit its ends. It conceals a wish in her forbidden by the prevailing codes of morality. The days of Maratha expansion did not bring about any kind of matrilineal system in Maharashtra equivalent to that of Kerala. But women were forced to take up greater family responsibilities than the one of simply managing the kitchen. This along with deep lying wish for equality with men has given shape to the blueprint of the traditional house in Shashi Deshpande. In AMT, the omniscient narrator complains that the role of women has not been recorded in the family document of Kalyani's house. The house, with its dark rooms, seems to represent the unexplored recesses of the mind of the female protagonists. In fact the house is the feminine unconscious itself motivating the characters in their various actions, enveloping them into the folds of a collective existence, with its maternal nourishing qualities. Women yearn to be one with the house but they are mercilessly expelled when it comes to carrying forward the tradition and prestige of the family, the male child becoming the beacon bearers of heritage. Hence a family without a male child is doomed to the fate of 'kulanamsam', a state where there is extinction of the family line. The vastu expert, Sri Kanippayoor Krishnan

Namboodiripad, made a study of the sketch of the familial house in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. He gave his valuable opinion that the house faces 'kulanam'. This has proved to be very interesting because none of the familial houses in the novels have a male heir. The misfortune that befalls the male inheritor makes way for the woman to become the heir to the structure, but the woman shoulders the responsibility of the familial house, fulfilling her duty with the utmost care and devotion. It is evident that the tragedy of 'kulanam' does not happen in the ancestral houses of Shashi Deshpande even in the absence of a male heir. It is invariably the woman who carries on the family tradition. The traditional values of the house are kept intact along with protecting the welfare of every one of the family members. The female protagonists, who become the rightful owners of these structures, seem to carry forward its name and prestige by upholding the values for which the house stood. This somehow satisfies their Freudian wish for the death of their rival. Shashi Deshpande herself reveals her 'complicity' in this wish by the ironical prologue that she gives to the section 'The Family'. For, she says, "Whatever wrong has been done by him, his son frees him from it all; therefore he is called a son. By his son a father stands firm in this world" (AMT

91). This quotation from the Brahadaranyaka Upanishad has often been misinterpreted to support a patriarchal world vision. The legendary house built by Vishwasrao as well as her own ancestral house in Pune is in the mind of Shashi Deshpande when she describes the old houses. But they take a colouring to suit her feminine will. Their memories make subtle combinations adding richness to the background of her novels. All the females share this archetype with her. The patriarchal concept of 'kulanasam' because of the death of the male heir, has no relevance in a truly feminine value system. The male oriented concept cares only for man and jeopardizes the position of woman, making her helpless and dependent on man for shelter. The superstitious paternal law is guilty of catering to injustice against women. Srimati Basu, in her essay "*Haklenewali: Indian Women's Discourses of Inheritance*", points to how, "Indian women have substantive (though not fully equal) legal rights to inheritance in the postcolonial era, but rarely lay claim to the natal family property they are legally entitled to, most often citing ideological reasons" (Basu 151). She explains the hostility directed towards the "*haklenewali*", the woman who claims her "rights", for, a woman who lays a claim to the natal property "is often inscribed in images of overreaching greed, selfishness, lack

of empathy and love for the natal family and a desire to cause family conflicts” (Basu 151). She states that the myth that women are waiting to grab property and destroy the natal family base is “frequently used to set up legal avenues disinheriting women without their knowledge, to indefinitely delay property division and, most often, to offer women token amounts in lieu of substantive property” (Basu 152). Here is a total disregard for female values and sensibilities as she is expected to be content to live in her father’s house and later in her husband’s house, spending most of her time and energy in looking after these houses to which she is, most often, unable to lay claims. The pent up unconscious feelings revolt against this, manifesting themselves in the feminine desire for the death of the male heir. The women, as seen in the novels of Shashi Deshpande, share a deep bonding with their parental houses and in their longing to become one with the house, they wish for the death of the male heir.

The male heir to the familial structures in the novels of Shashi Deshpande either dies, or meets with some other misfortune. As already stated, the ‘female heir’ shoulders the responsibility of the house and the family members, and carries forward the prestige of the familial house. This necessitates a rethinking of the concept of

'kulanagam', which, though devoid of any intrinsic meaning, is widely accepted as true. The feminist thinkers are against the view that the family heritage ends with the death of the male heir. It had been because of this belief that property was given away to distant male relatives rather than to one's own daughter in olden days. It is a patriarchal concept which upholds the male child as the only 'saviour' of the family heritage. Luce Irigaray, the French feminist, notes:

The beginning of patriarchy represents man as the legal head of the family or state coinciding with the weakening of the woman and the dissolution of the mother-daughter relationship. The relationship was destroyed to establish an order linked to private property and to the transmission of possessions within a male genealogy. [Irigaray 98)

This in fact reduces women to the position of child bearers to man. She is indulged in a lot of pampering at the birth of a male child. At the same time, the family members express their disappointment at the birth of a girl child, which means that, it is her duty to bear a son and prevent the state of 'kulanagam'. Thus women are psychologically burdened with the responsibility of producing a son for the family, because only with a son, "the continuity and

safekeeping of the father's soul is reassured" (Sharma 5). This overemphasis on the male child carrying forward the family name and prestige has originated from a society steeped in patriarchal values. It is evident that such an ideology has no intrinsic value. Resistance to gender inequality has found expression through women's writing. Feminist critics like Elaine Showalter has analysed women's writings, throwing light on how texts resist and transcend gender definitions. There is a close connection between the social location of women and the themes of their writing, the study of which is crucial to understanding patriarchy. Shashi Deshpande's creative writing, which has evolved out of her interaction with people and out of her personal experiences, seems to break through certain age old belief that have been prevalent in society. The tragic condition of 'kulanasam' does not in any way affect the ancestral homes even though there is the absence of the male heir. The woman, in these novels, is efficient and devoted to the familial house, doing complete justice to the role as inheritor of the familial property. It could be surmised that the injustice of gender discrimination lies dormant in the unconscious of the female protagonists. The wish for the death of the male heir can be seen as a disruptive force acting from the level of the semiotic in the female

protagonists as well as in the author herself. This disruptive force disturbs women since there is injustice in gender discrimination. This accounts for the discontent that the female protagonists in these novels experience when they are in their nuclear homes.

The archetype of the house in the unconscious of the women is aptly described through Sumi in AMT. She begins her hunt 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 Big House. She tries again and again but it is the same sketch that appears on the paper:

A sketch of a house, her perfect house, it is supposed to be. But a strange thing happens. When it is done she finds she has drawn a sketch of this, the Big House. She destroys it and starts afresh, but once again it is the same. It is as if there is a tracing of this house already on the paper, on any paper that she begins to draw on and the lines she draws have no choice but to follow that unseen tracing. (AMT 78)

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, it came to the surface, influencing her in her search for a house. The shadowy depths of the house bring to life the lingering memories which come alive to these women through the faded, unpainted walls, the subtle smells and familiar sounds. The deep recesses of her own mind terrifies Saru in TDHT when her mother accuses her of killing her own brother. It surfaces in the form of a dialogue between the conscious and the unconscious:

You killed your brother.

I did'nt. Truly I did'nt. It was an accident. I loved him, my little brother. I tried to save him. Truly I tried. But I could'nt. And I ran away. Yes, I ran away, I admit that.

But I did'nt kill him.

How do you know you did'nt kill him? How do you know? (TDHT 146)

The mysterious dark interiors seem to communicate to the women, exuding a message which is the same as that which emanates from the depths of their unconscious. It is a silent message of revolt,

of rebellion, a strategy of subverting the patriarchal order of a society which always defines women's identity and sexuality in relation to men. The silent revolt against gender discrimination coming from the depths of their unconscious disturbs them as is evident from the thoughts of Saru, in TDHT, when she realises that her parental house had really meant a lot to her as she is disturbed by the word 'disinherited'. "Disinherited...the word came into her mind...But now when this shabby old house meant nothing to her, why did she have this feeling of being disinherited?" (TDHT 31). She is also disturbed that her husband's home was not her home- nor was her father's home. She says "How odd to live for too long and discover that you have no home at all" (TDHT 155). The same feeling of being expelled from the family tradition is evident in Jaya when the Dadar flat is given to her brother. When her mother gives the flat to Dinkar, Jaya becomes resentful and hurt. She muses: "And yet I should have been prepared. Dada was Ai's son, the elder of her two sons, the eldest of her three children-it was natural she should have wanted him to have it. But the sting remained" (TLS 41). It is evident that she is filled with remorse to know that she has nothing to do with the ancestral property. Jaya knows that, while still young, the women are made to realize

that they do not belong to the family as is evident from Ramukaka's words to Jaya when he triumphantly shows her the family tree which goes back to two hundred years. There is an upsurge of rebellion in her to find that she is not included in the family tree. She realizes with growing resentment that even those women who are married into the family are not in the picture.

A broader fictional survey will give a hint as to how the wish for the death of the male heir has larger archetypal significance. We shall take for discussion here two British novels and a novel by another Indo-Anglian writer Arundhati Roy. They reveal to us different aspects of the problem which tend to deny the woman natural justice. In Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen we come across a practice by which a man is forced to deny his daughters his properties and wealth and hand them over to distant male relatives. The Longbourne estate is entailed due to the fact that Mr. Bennett do not have a son. It is ridiculous to think that his daughters have no right whatsoever to the property and it is passed on to his cousin Mr. Collins. Land ownership had its own importance in Jane Austen's time because the income from the land makes the man in the family free from the necessity to earn a living. A landed estate gave the family a status in society and it

became necessary that they had a son to carry on the family prestige. In landed classes - the landed gentry, aristocracy, and royalty - property and title, if one had one, were passed down through the male line (patriline), from father to oldest son (primogeniture). For the most part, property was held by men; in special cases, married women might own property, but generally, they did not. At marriage, marriage settlements were written up deciding how much money a woman would have to spend during her lifetime, what would come to her on her husband's death, and how much money would come to each potential offspring of the marriage other than the eldest son, who would inherit the main estate, generally, and much of the money coming with it. If a family owned more than one estate, sometimes second and third sons, etc., would inherit smaller estates, the largest or main one going to the eldest son. Because the eldest son inherited most of his father's property, at a husband's death, a wife would not necessarily have anything if marriage settlements did not provide for her.

In Wuthering Heights, Linton, an ailing child, is born of Heathcliff's marriage to Isabella. Linton inherits Thrushcross Grange because Edgar Linton has no male child. For that reason alone,

Heathcliff claims him back after Isabella's death thirteen years later. Through playing on Cathy's pity, Heathcliff manages to engineer a courtship between Catherine, daughter of Cathy and Edgar, against her father's wishes and commands. While Edgar is dying, the unsuspecting Cathy is lured to Wuthering Heights, detained there by force, and married to Linton. On her father's death and after Linton's death, Heathcliff's design is accomplished: he is master of both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange.

In the Indian context, a girl child, though she may have legal rights, does not lay claim to property after marriage. It is a sad plight for women who have been widowed, since they belong neither to their parent's home nor to their husband's families. The famous Booker Prize winning novel The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy reveals how the grand old Ayemenam House would lawfully go to Chacko, while Ammu, his sister had no right to it. Baby Kochamma, the unmarried aunt in the family makes it very clear to the twin children of Ammu that they "lived on sufferance in the Ayemenam House, their maternal grandmother's house where they really had no right to be" (Roy 45). Ammu had returned to the parental home as a divorcee, with the twins Estha and Rahel. It was extremely difficult to be

accepted back into the orthodox Syrian Christian family since hers was a love marriage to a Hindu.

A married daughter had no position in her parents home.

As for a divorced daughter-according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all. And as for a divorced daughter from a love marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochamma's outrage. As for a divorced daughter from an intercommunity love marriage- Baby Kochamma chose to remain quiveringly silent on the subject. (Roy 46)

Ammu did as much work in the factory as Chacko, but whenever he was dealing with food inspectors or sanitary engineers, he always referred to it as "my factory, my pineapples, my pickles" (Roy 57). Legally this was the case because, Ammu, as a daughter, had no claim to the property or factory. There is a quiet resignation about the Ayemenem house as if it could only watch helplessly, "like an old man with rheumy eyes watching children play, seeing only transience in their shrill elation and their whole hearted commitment to life" (Roy 165). It is worth noting that Mary Roy, the mother of Arundhati Roy is a crusader for equal property rights for Syrian

Christian women. In 1986, in response to a court case initiated by Mary Roy, the Supreme Court ruled that daughters are entitled to an equal share in their father's property. This was met with a lot of opposition, but Roy succeeded in this difficult task.

Coming back to Shashi Deshpande we are struck by another thing. There, in her novels, is not only a revolt against male heirship but a defiance of patriarchal notions of sex life. Here, the sex act outside the wedlock is no cause of shock or trauma. It goes almost unnoticed in the general flow of the tale. At the same time it has the power to invigorate the female protagonist with a greater energy and purpose. This happens under the protective wings of the ancient house making it seem that the house itself is guilty of 'complicity'. It is not surprising that the house is female 'unconscious' itself. In RS, Indu has a sexual relationship with her cousin Naren, Madhu in SR with the painter, Manjeri in MO with the tenant Raman. Shashi Deshpande uses the psychological reality of the familial house to reconstruct women's experience giving voice to muted ideologies, registering resistance.

# The Resurgent Woman

Preetha M.M “The place of ancestral homes in the development of the female self as seen in the novels of Shashi Deshpande” Thesis. Department of English, University of Calicut, 2007

## Chapter II

### The Resurgent Woman

Shashi Deshpande's ancestral house shares its complicity with the women by giving them access to the early delights, the psychosomatic "jouissance," which, according to Julia Kristeva is "channelled from the unconscious and if set against official literary modes, the iron grip of the Symbolic is broken" (Kristeva 132). The emerging subtext of the novel reveals a semiotic community of womanly bonding, the ancestral house having a mothering effect on them. This maternal, nourishing space does not allow the woman to be stifled by the Law of the Father. The spontaneity and harmony shared by the women in these houses bind them in a kind of utopia of their own, freeing them from the symbolic order of confinement. The feeling is best described by Urmi in BV, when she fondly remembers the Ranidurg house where she grew up. She was deeply attached to the house and to Baiajji, her grandmother. Her happiest moments seem to be the time when she had her first baby there:

They seem to me even now like an idyll, those two months we spent in Ranidurg. Vaana, Mandira, the two new born babies and I - with Akka the matriarch who

looked after us all. Nothing existed but our physical needs, and those were all fulfilled. It was a primeval, innocent world. (BV 114)

The same Utopian experience of harmony is evident during the Mangala Gowri Puja in SR where the women had an all night revelry when they could enjoy unquestioned freedom. Madhu observes that there was “something uncontrolled about them, a kind of wildness, a volatile energy as if these, finally were their real selves, breaking through the masks of Aais, Maamis and Kaakis, that they wore throughout their lives” (SR 137). They seem to be relaxed and at ease, gaining the opportunity to be themselves instead of projecting the image which a patriarchal society expected of them. This unique bonding among women, bringing them together in a semiotic togetherness constitutes the “lesbian continuum” for Adrienne Rich who observes that this bonding among women is the same as shared by the mother and daughter, creating an empathic and nurturant world of their own. Rich celebrates the power of mother love and sees all women as originally and potentially lesbian because all women first love another woman. She describes lesbian relationships as invested with the intensity and ambivalence of the mother-daughter bond.

Within this continuum she includes not only sexual acts but a whole range of “woman identified” experience. She offers a compelling definition of lesbianism :

I mean the term *lesbian continuum* to include a range—through each woman’s life and throughout history—of woman identified experience; not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman. If we expand it to embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support....we begin to grasp breadths of female history and psychology which have lain out of reach as a consequence of limited, mostly clinical, definitions of ‘lesbianism’. (Rich 648-9)

The “lesbian continuum”, present in Shashi Deshpande's novels harbours the archetype of the house where there is no place for the male heir. Akka, the 'female heir' in RS, is the family matriarch who maintains the tradition and family prestige of the ancestral house. Indu, when she returns to the ancestral house after the death of Akka,

is able to relate to her as Narmada-Atya narrates the story of the panic stricken Akka trying to escape the bestial sexual advances of her husband. She was married off at the tender age of twelve to a man who was well past thirty. Narmada Atya remembered him as a tall bulky man with large, coarse features while she was small and dainty, pretty with her round face, fair skin, straight nose and curly hair. Six months after her marriage she grew up and was sent to her husband's house and was sent to her husband's house where she 'grew up.' The nightmare that she had to go through there was never spoken of. Akka's father was aloof and unapproachable, while her mother had died when she was still a child. But it was heard that the thirteen year old bride had tried to run away twice, for which her mother-in-law whipped her and locked her up for three days, denying her food. When she was sent back to her husband's room, it seems she clung to her mother-in-law pleading, "Lock me up again, lock me up." When this frightened child could not satisfy him, he had mistresses. Akka could never give birth to a living child and every time she had a miscarriage, she was blamed by her mother-in-law which made life hell for her. After twenty years of marriage, the man took up with one woman and was crazy about her. Then, one day, he had a stroke and it took six men to carry

him home. Akka looked after him for two years after which he died. She seemed to be in control of the situation, keeping him spotlessly clean. It was later understood that the horrible sounds that he was making was an attempt to convey that he wanted to see his mistress. But Akka, who appears ruthless when she denies him his request, cannot be blamed taking into consideration her tragic and helpless life with such an insensitive man. Narmada Atya explains to Indu:

And Akka, calm and cool, said, "Listen to me. It's my turn now. I've listened to you long enough. She came here. Twice. She wanted to see you. She cried and begged to be allowed to see you just for a short while. I threw her out. You'll never see her again." And...that giant of a man, began to cry...But Akka...she just looked at him.

(RS 71)

Indu could identify with her great aunt, the woman who had selected her as the heir to the property. It is worthwhile to notice here that it is through the money that her husband left her that she becomes so powerful in her brother's family. As a Brahmin widow in a traditional household, she is an oppressed person but it is the heirship to the property that reverses the parameters making the readers difficult

to generalise about women like her. The old house was her refuge and solace and she dedicated the rest of her life in looking after her brother's children and the rest of the large household. She was a strict disciplinarian and the whole household revolved around her. Akka makes Indu the heir to the ancestral property leaving her all the jewels, which are a symbol of the family tradition. The rightful ownership of the house instills confidence in Indu, urging her to help the family members and to do justice to the important role that has been handed down to her by Akka. Indu is able to relate to the dead Akka, and this blurring of ego boundaries creates a new consciousness of herself and of others around her. The dedication with which Indu goes about solving the problems of the huge household shows her sincerity and understanding of the family values. Indu's boldness, sensitivity and unselfishness must have impressed Akka, though it was never expressed openly. The very fact that Akka had chosen her as the heir, fortifies her, at the same time making her aware of her responsibilities. Even her willingness to sell the house to which she is very much attached shows her concern in settling the family members. It appears ironic that she leaves all her wealth to her grand niece Indu, Indu and her father being two members of the family who have married outside

the community thereby breaking the purity of caste. It is evident that there is a deep level of affinity between these women which has motivated Akka to choose Indu as the heir. Just as Akka, Indu too is empowered by the heirship. As rightly observed by Jasbir Jain:

The fact that a woman has been chosen over all the possible heirs is symbolic of the shift in gender roles. Indu's homecoming is essential for her growth; the legacy is the tribute of one strong woman to another. (Jain 36)

The women here, inspite of the restrictions imposed upon them by society, are able to motivate the other family members by their creative energy. They are able to assert themselves overruling the opinions of their husbands as in the case of Kaki, who refuses to allow her daughter Mini to be married to Naren. The interior domestic space of the house promotes different kinds of bonding with the different women in it but it induces a harmonious female community under its shelter. The stay in the old house prompts Indu to relate to the different female experiences. The house urges her to contemplate on the existence of inner strength in the women of her family who have spent their whole life slavishly without a word of appreciation for their services. Kaki was always in the smoke blackened kitchen, a kitchen

having fireplaces at both ends. One was for the morning meal with all the elaborate rituals and the other for the simpler evening meal. All the relatives came to live there as if they had a claim not only on the house but also on those who happened to live there. Kaka, who was the eldest had to pay the taxes and electricity bills which worried Kaki, who had a secret dream of owning a "small house with a small kitchen, a gas to cook on and shining pots and pans lined on shelves" (RS 121). But for Narmada Atya, it was different. She was born in the house and wished to die there just as her parents and Akka had. The house was a refuge to her when she returned there as a childless widow. Sunanda Akka too found the house a refuge because of her insecure life with her irresponsible husband. She clung to the house as it was her only shelter. Indu's cousin Mini, who was going to get married, had inculcated the traditional feminine qualities since her childhood. She had no other aim in life and so devotes herself to the family members. She was, in every way, the girl that she was expected to be, helping women with odd chores and waiting upon her father and brothers. Indu could understand the reason behind Mini's submission before her parents decision of getting her married to a man who was neither properly educated nor mentally sound. In reality

Mini was trying to save her father from the complexities of marriage since he was facing a financial crisis. Akka had agreed to pay for Mini's marriage since the groom was a distant relative of hers. Mini had been toned to merge her aspirations and desires with those of her family and so accepts, knowing that the only thing that she was really good at was looking after a house and "to get a home, I have to get married. This is not my home, is it?" (RS 125). Vrinda Nabar's comment is worth noting:

Morover, even if we concede, that the girl is an alien in her father's home, it is man made laws and social strictures that make her so. Right from birth, a girl is made to feel like a bird of passage in her father's home.  
(Nabar 160)

Indu contemplates on the helplessness of women, the conventions and norms established by society stifling them into silence and passiveness. It is through the house that Indu can relate to all of them, helping her to make decisions for their future welfare.

Sarita's mother was the matriarchal head of the family in TDHT. Her father seems a non entity though his presence is there throughout. Sarita reflects that her father had always been so much a man, "the

master of the house, not to be bothered by the trivials of daily routine” (TDHT 20). It is the death of Dhruva, her brother, that makes the property come into her hands. The family house did not mean much to her as is evident from the way she thinks of it as “the shabby old house” (TDHT 31). Moreover, it was dominated by her mother who showed an obvious preference for Dhruva, her brother, for the sole reason that he was a boy. Sarita, the daughter is considered as a burden to be married off to some other family. The mother even accused Sarita of killing her own brother when he was drowned in a pool of water. The house, which held unpleasant childhood memories, repelled her. The feeling of insecurity made her rebel against her home, which seemed to stand for old values and tradition. She stayed in a hostel, studied medicine and became a doctor. She married a man belonging to a lower caste in the hope of shocking her orthodox mother. She achieved material prosperity, an ‘ideal family’ with two children and success in career. In the meanwhile her mother died of cancer, never calling on the daughter, who was a doctor. She died unforgiving. But years later, Sarita, with all her success in life, feels discontent and is pulled to her ancestral house by some unseen power. It seems to be a force acting at the level of the semiotic, which attracts her to the

house. Leaving her husband and children, she visits her father, who has Madhav, a paying guest living with him. She realizes that the house had really meant a lot to her. What is surprising is that the powerful presence of her mother seems to fill the house even after her death. Sarita, on returning to the ancestral house is flooded with memories of her dead mother, even though there is not a single photograph of hers in the house. In fact a photograph is not required since the house itself was an embodiment of the mother. The father and Madhav are both alienated from the spirit of the house. The dead mother seems to live on and everything in the house seems to function according to her dictates. Sarita is able to imbibe an unconscious pre-symbolic energy from the interior depths of the house which helps her to reconstruct the mother daughter bond from which she had been alienated. This bond appears to be so strong that there are moments when she is not able to differentiate herself from the mother. She becomes conscious of such a sensation as she makes tea in the old kitchen of the ancestral house:

She would pump up the Primus into life setting on it the long handled brass vessel always used for making tea, water being measured out first with the cup that had lost

an ear. The gestures, the actions, the very words that accompanied them were, though she did not realize it, her mother's. As if she was unconsciously, unknown to herself, mimicking the mother she had never admired, never endeavoured to imitate. But there was in her, as she made the tea, curious confusion. I've done this before. No, not I, but my mother. This is what she did when there were visitors. And she went on jumbling herself with the dead woman, sometimes feeling she was acting out a role, sometimes feeling she was her mother herself. (TDHT 106)

This merging of identity between the mother and daughter shapes her understanding of herself, enabling her to re-examine her past, strengthening her in the process of introspection.

Kalyani, in AMT is the strength and support to her daughter Sumi and the three granddaughters doing everything possible for their comfort and well being. It is these four women who occupy the lower part of the house, that give life to the Big House, bringing together generations. The huge solid house was built for many generations of sons, but ironically the family does not have a son to carry on its

name. Kalyani had given birth to a mentally retarded son, who was lost when he was very young. The necessity of having a son to carry on the family tradition was so ingrained in Shripathi's mind that he failed to think of what the future held for a mentally handicapped boy in this world. It was after losing him that Shripathi withdrew into a world of his own without talking to his wife. Shripathi must have been apprehensive about death, considering his life a total failure since he believes that the continuity of a man's soul is assured only through his son. He cannot consider his two daughters as his children and so he spends his whole life in isolation in the lonely room upstairs, hoping to inflict a punishment on his wife for losing the child. She is made to realize that while losing her son, a male heir, she had failed as a mother as well as a wife. Kalyani, instead of trying to defend herself to prove her innocence, remains silent about it. She does not brood over the fact that she is ignored by her husband. In her simplicity, she believes that such an existence is better than widowhood and makes herself busy when Sumi and her three daughters come to stay there. Sumi had returned to her parental house with her three daughters when her husband Gopal walked out of their lives. The domestic space in this ancient structure nourish the women in such a way that

they seem to form a community of their own. Sripathi and Gopal are relegated to the background with no individuality of their own. The Big House seems to be an extension of Kalyani, as observed by Rohit:

He sees the way her hand brushes a wall, a door, as if communicating through them with the house, he hears the inflection in her voice when she speaks of her father. And something comes through...this house is a living presence for Kalyani. (AMT 126)

It is this house which sustains her when she lost her mentally retarded son, soothing her, when Shripati silently accuses her of losing the child and it is the same house, the ownership of which fortifies her when she loses her husband and daughter in an accident. After the initial shock of losing Shripati and Sumi, she is ready to take up the reins of responsibility of her three grand daughters whose father turns out to be of not much use to them and fades away into the background. The girls are not much affected by the turn of events. Kalyani is there to protect them, the Big House nourishing them with the much needed courage. The rightful ownership of the house infuses her with strength and confidence, which fortifies her in shouldering the responsibility of her three granddaughters, who are now

motherless. Towards the end of the novel, the author gives us a picture of Kalyani standing proudly in front of The Big House with her granddaughters, seemingly proclaiming to the world that nothing can destroy them. The big solid house, which was “built by a man not just for himself but for his sons and son’s sons” (AMT 3), seem to readily accept these women who held the promise of carrying forward its culture and heritage.

The ancestral house in Bhavanipur, in the novel SR, has a mothering effect on Madhu welcoming her into its shelter when she is devastated by the death of her son, Adit, in a bomb blast. Leaving her husband, she stays in this house with Lata and Hari taking up an offer to write the biography of Savitribai Indorkar, the ageing diva of the Gwalior Gharana. As she walks about the house savouring the sense of freedom she finds an affinity with the house, as she thinks:

I find myself seeing each room as a different entity, each with its own personality. Like two people communicating directly, meeting for the first time without the friends who introduced them to each other, the house and I seem to be forging a new relationship. (BV 114)

Madhu’s childhood experience is very different from the

conventional family background, the motherless child being brought up by her father and a male servant Babu. Madhu adored her father who was Doctorsaab to the people in Neemgaon. He was tall and slim and the fact that he was a doctor set him apart from the rest of the people. There was the debonair air of a hero about him in the way he held his cigarette, tapped it on the back of his hand before lighting it and the way he held it casually in his mouth while he worked. Madhu felt comfortable and secure with him, their relationship being built “not on information, but on trust”(SR 175). Her childhood friend Munni is the daughter of Savitribai Indorekar and her Muslim tabla player Ghulam Saab. It was Munni who first introduced Madhu to the exciting world of female friendship. Both of them belonged to families which did not conform to the norms of the conventional society of Neemgaon where each family had its place marked out for it according to religion, caste, money, family background etc. Madhu is shocked to know that her father had a mistress. He had married twice and after the death of his second wife at childbirth, he must have decided not to marry again. Later Madhu is made aware of the fact that though her father smoked, drank and had a mistress, he got away with it because he was a man. Whereas Munni’s mother was surrounded by an aura of disapproval and curiosity, looked down upon

as a woman who had left her husband to live with a muslim tabla player. Munni rejects this man vehemently denying that he is her father and in an effort to break away, the mother and daughter wipe out each other from their lives. While being interviewed for the biography, Savitribai never mentions this daughter of hers. Madhu's stay in the old house brings memories of various relationships which keeps surfacing, easing her out of the terrible pain of her son's death. Her mother Kaveri was one of six sisters, each one of them named after a river. Narmada, Sindhu (Leela), Kaveri, Ganga, Yamuna and Godavari, all of them moving on to lead different kinds of life though two of them had turned rebels- Leela and Kaveri. Leela became a widow but was involved in trade union activities and married Joe who was a christian, a widower and the father of two children, Tony and Paula. Madhu's mother had turned into a rebel by marrying a non brahmin, a man fifteen years older than her. The quiet house relates her to her dead aunt Leela, the trade unionist, an activist and a rebel. While collecting information about Savitribai, she is able to have insights about the difficult life of Leela who had deviated from the social norms. She thinks:

I've begun thinking that in writing about Bai, I'm writing about Leela as well. And my mother and all those women

who reached beyond their grasp. Bai moving out of her class in search of her destiny as a singer, Leela breaking out of the conventions of widowhood, looking for justice for the weak, my mother running in her bare feet, using her body as an instrument for speed—yes, they're in it together. But they paid the price for their attempts to break out. (SR 284)

Here again the house seems to promote a harmony among these women, revealing vital continuities between different types of shared female experience, leading to a blurring of ego boundaries.

The ownership of the flat came to Jaya, in the novel TLS, when her brother Dada gifted it to her. The flat was valuable to them because it was part of their family history. Dada considered it as their link to Bombay Talkies via Makarandmama, who had caused disgrace to the family by becoming an actor. It was Jaya's father who had helped him and the flat was bestowed on Ai, Jaya's mother, who in turn had given it to her son, Dinkar. When Dinkar gifted the flat to Jaya, she made a feeble hypocritical protest to her brother, though in reality, she was elated. She knew that the flat was a part of the family and possession of it made her feel as if she belonged to the family. It gave her

importance and a feeling of being wanted, and in the blissful atmosphere of the flat she hated the intrusion of even her husband, Mohan. The fact that the flat was gifted to Jaya was a secret which was kept hidden from Mohan. They stay in this flat when Mohan had to temporarily escape from a money scandal in his office. Jaya is completely relaxed in the place though it is a contrast to their well kept flat in Churchgate. The lack of material comforts does not disturb her at all, in fact it seems to lessen her burden, relieving her from the drudgery of housework. The flat, with its family memories, promote a feeling of oneness with other women. It is here that she feels the despair of her mother-in-law, who had to put up with an autocrat husband. She listened to her sister-in-law Vimala, as she narrated an incident of how she had caught her mother mercilessly beating herself on the face, "dealing out a macabre punishment" "screaming in a thin, ugly voice, 'I cant I cant'" (TLS 38). She died a week later. She had gone to a midwife to get herself aborted, thus killing herself in a futile attempt to stop the chain of unwanted pregnancies. Then there is Jeeja, her maid servant, uncomplainingly supporting an unemployed drunkard husband, accepting his second marriage as perfectly justified and also supporting her drunkard stepson. There is Vimala, Jaya's

sister-in-law, who lets herself bleed to death, determined to maintain that bondage of despairing silence forced on her by a hostile world. Kusum, a distant cousin who was fading into a mental vacuity, finally leapt to her death, rejected as of “no use to anyone” (TLS 22). She becomes extremely sensitive to the sound of a woman being beaten by her husband in the neighbouring flat, the man shouting “‘Open your mouth you bitch. Tell me where you went,’ and the woman’s soft moaning, ‘mother, mother, mother’” (TLS 38). As Jaya reflects on the harassment of women around her during her stay in the Dadar flat, the over emphasis on the male child proves to be an important factor leading to suffering in many women. Kusum loses her mental sanity and finally commits suicide by jumping into a well in her craziness for a male child. Nayana becomes a childbearing machine each time giving birth to a girl child but always hoping that the next would be a boy. Jeeja is beaten up by her husband for not giving him a son, her stepson Rajaram’s wife is beaten by her husband who is a drunkard. Jaya herself was not much loved by her mother as Ai always showed a preference for Ravi and Dada, her two brothers. Ai had gifted the pearls, the only legacy from her mother the other- *ajji*, to Ravi’s wife much to the discontent of Jaya, making her feel like an

outsider. Even Ai did not inherit the jewels of the other- *ajji*, though she was the only daughter and had longed to possess them. The other- *ajji* had a hoard of jewels to which she clung with passion even though as a widow she could not wear them. Ai had hoped Jaya would get those jewels, being the only granddaughter. It is ironic that all the jewels had gone to Chandumama who had no children. “But he was The Son. Perhaps the old woman had not been able to get away from that fact finally” (TLS 112). Ai had been disappointed to find that her only legacy was a pearl bracelet and one string of pearls. The same Ai, forgetting that she had a granddaughter Rati, had given the pearls to Ravi’s wife Asha who came from a rich family. Jaya, who had never hankered after jewellery, is evidently upset as she thinks, “But surely Rati as a granddaughter had a better right to them than Asha, who was after all a daughter-in-law?” (113) Women like Jaya’s mother and grandmother, by internalising the patriarchal norms, cause the anguish of rejection in their daughters. Though helpless by herself, the stay in the Dadar flat makes her acutely sensitive to the sufferings of those around her. It leads her to a resolution to take up writing seriously in an attempt to reach out to women.

Urmi, in BV, grew up in the Ranidurg House, a huge house

with a spacious porch and lofty pillars. Here she was looked after by her Papa's mother Baiajji. Papa had sent Urmī, as a small child, to his ancestral house to be looked after by his mother. Maybe he did not want the ancestral house to go solely to his son Amrut. It was his way of including Urmī too while bestowing the property. Amrut, when he finds that both he and his sister were the inheritors, says that he had thought Papa would disinherit him. Just as in the other novels of Shashi Deshpande, Urmī feels a vague resentment against her brother deep inside her when Amrut insists that the house need not be sold. She feels that it is his "sense of property asserting itself" (BV 95). To Urmī, who grew up in that house, the house holds memories. She is deeply attached to the house and to Baiajji, her grandmother. Her happiest moments seem to be the time when she had her first baby in Ranidurg House, providing an idyllic atmosphere to Urmī in the company of her grandmother, Vanaa and Mandira. Later Urmī loses her one year old daughter, which makes her extremely sensitive to women's intense relationship with their children. It is this crisis in her life- the death of her baby daughter Anusha- as well as her lonely attempt to come to terms with the death of the baby which gets herself involved in the issues bothering other women. She is able to speak

out for Mira and Kalpana. Mira is the mother of Kishore, Urmila's husband, who expressed herself through poems, which never reached the public. These autobiographical poems, along with her diaries, are a testimonial to her tortured existence as the wife of a man whom she despised. Urmila discovers these from a dark corner of the house which she was convinced reflected her secret emotions. As she read out the poems, Akka breaks into tears. After Mira's death, her husband married Akka only because he wanted a mother for his son. Urmi wonders:

What memories of her own life did this poem bring back for Akka? Did they say it of her and her husband too? A couple just like Laxmi-Narayan? Or were her tears born of pure pity for Mira, the frightened girl who feared 'the coming of the dark-clouded, engulfing night?' And how was she so sure the experience was Mira's own? I know because its here, in her diary, the clay out of which she shaped her poem. (BV 66)

Akka too must have suffered since her husband married her only to get a mother for his son. She gets a daughter from him, a daughter who was never noticed by the father. Kalpana is also a victim of rape, though not in the same way as Mira. Her mother Shakutai

reveals the anguish of a woman who is caught in the strict morality that her society demands of her. Shakutai in the beginning refuses to accept that her daughter could have been raped. She pleads, "don't tell anyone, I'll never be able to hold up my head again, who'll marry the girl, we're decent people" (BV 71). It reveals the hold that a traditionally patriarchal society has on the women in India. It points to the terrifying importance given to chastity of the woman and to marriage as the ultimate goal of a woman. Urmi realises that the lives of women like Shakutai are dominated by the fear of society and the expectations of this society which makes living almost impossible for them. This leads to an awakening in Urmi which promotes her to re-identify her relationship with her mother. She had harboured feelings of resentment towards her mother for sending her away to Baiaji's house while her brother Amrut stayed with the parents. So Urmi's relationship with her mother Inni, was based on some sort of misapprehension. She had misunderstood her mother thinking that she, as a small child, had been deliberately sent away for her mother's convenience. But the house seems to channel her thoughts to enquire into the cause of her displacement and her mother's predicament. Inni was married very young and had become a mother at an age when she

was unable to cope with motherhood. She was not able to look after the child properly and Papa was angry with her. So he sent Urmi to his ancestral home because he was angry with his wife for leaving the girl child alone with the man servant in the house one day. He was very stern and no amount of pleading would change his mind. This revelation dispels the darkness of Urmi's misunderstanding and she is able to relate to her mother. She muses, "A sense of being vulnerable and naked, as if some armour I've been wearing all these years-against what-has been taken off " (BV 200). She thought of Inni, the mother who had carried the baby in her womb and had gone through the pain of childbirth, but was deprived of the right to be with her baby and the helplessness with which she yielded to her husband's decision. She could easily relate to the woman in her mother, just as she could relate to the woman in Mira, her dead mother-in-law through the poems which were discovered from a dark corner of the house. This makes her realise that all women should know their mothers and grandmothers which would lead to constructing a female tradition. While reconstructing Mira's harrowing experience she becomes aware that it is the sharing of experience and supporting each other that are essential parts of bonding. She has an uncanny feeling that "it is Mira

who is taking me by the hand and leading me..." (BV 135). Urmi seems to realize that the female experiences of childbearing and nurturing of the child makes women aware of the strong emotional bonds that relate a mother with her child and it is this same bonding which makes a woman relate to other women in society.

It is evident that the women in the novel suffer not solely because of men but more because of their own sense of subjugation, a fact which they do not seem to be aware of. Hence it becomes necessary that they awaken themselves to this reality, which would, to a certain extent help in countering the problems they face. They harbour feelings of resentment against other women for some reason or other. Almost all of Shashi Deshpande's heroines have some misunderstanding with their mother, which is later resolved when they come together under the collective existence of the ancestral home. This resolution is attained through a painful process of introspection and observation of women around them. In BV, there are five pairs of mother- daughters, Inni-Urmi, Mira's mother-Mira, Shakutai-Kalpana, Akka-Vanaa and Vanaa-Mandira, who share a strained relationship between them. Urmi is dubious as to why she was sent away to Ranidurg House to her grandparents while her brother Amrut stayed home. Mira resented her mother because she was forced into

marriage while she wanted to continue her studies. She was apprehensive about womanhood and marriage but her family members ignored her feelings. Mira believed that the silence of her helpless mother had pushed her into an unwanted marriage. It is evident that being a traditional woman, the mother could see a future for her daughter only through marriage and childbirth. Mira would have liked to ask her, "why do you want me to repeat your history when you despair of your own?" (BV 126). In almost all the novels, the mothers, caught up in the traditional role of mother force their daughters into marriage hoping all the time that their daughter's fate would be better than their own. Shakutai, though belonging to the lower order of society and representing the working class women, the mother-daughter relationship is no different for Shakutai and Kalpana. Shakutai is the representative protective mother, apprehensive about her grown up daughter which makes her daughter hate her. The father has left to live with another woman and the daughter blames the mother for her quarrelsome ways, which, she believes has sent her father away. Kalpana did not want to lead the suffocating life of her mother and her mother's sister Sulu. She wanted none of her mother's dreams, just as Mira reveals through her poem, "To make myself in your image/ Was never the goal I sought" (BV 124). Later, Sulu's husband rapes Kalpana

brutally for which the mother blames herself for failing in her duty and also Kalpana for dressing herself up and attracting men. Urmi's sister-in-law Vanaa is a medical social worker who is often away from home which makes her daughter Mandira feel neglected. Vanaa is upset about her daughter's resentment towards her. It becomes very difficult to get along since Mandira wanted her mother's affection while Vanaa could not cope with the tantrums of her daughter. Though her husband Harish, a doctor, is never around, nobody found fault with him. Urmi succeeds to a certain extent in consciousness raising by making women aware of the conventional false notions that they were fostering. She argues with Shakutai that it was not Kalpana's fault that she was raped but that of the man who had done it and he deserved punishment. Urmi confronts the reality by relating to Mira, Akka, Vanaa, Inni, Shakutai, Sulumavshi and Kalpana which helps in assessing herself and overcoming the sense of loss in her life. In spite of the suffering and anguish there is a sense of identity which binds them together, emphasising the idea of 'the binding vine.' It is through the Ranidurg House that Urmi forges a unique relationship with her grandmother and it is this same empathy that binds her to these different women, forming a female community of their own. The need to identify oneself with other women seem to be an urgent

message that Shashi Deshpande seems to convey. As Vijaya Guttal observes, “the novel celebrates women’s coming together with other women as friends and companions and sharers of life rather than as rivals for approval by men” (Guttal 171).

In *MO*, Manjeri occupies the ancestral house though the ownership of the house goes to Sachi, Manjeri’s sister’s daughter. Baba has two daughters, Manjeri and Malu. Manjeri’s son Anand, who is the rightful heir to the property, is overlooked when Baba makes Sachi the heir to the house in his will. This inheritance acquires significance in the novel since Baba is trying to convey a message to the other family members, making it possible for Manjeri and the others to “move on, to go beyond what happened” (*MO* 309). Baba had felt it right to give the ownership to Sachi, who is born to Malu through an illegitimate relationship with Manjeri’s husband. Manjeri, distraught with grief, can never forgive her husband Shyam for deceiving her. Their marriage is shattered after the shocking discovery of betrayal and later Shyam dies by drowning. Malu, after giving birth to Sachi, dies. Ironically, it is Manjeri who looks after Sachi. Baba was aware of the mental trauma that his family was going through and was probably looking for ways to mitigate the painful experience

of his daughter. By making Sachi the heir to the familial house, he was giving her a rightful place in the family, making everyone accept her as a member of their family. The familial house promotes unique ties between Manjeri and Sachi. Sachi was initially a symbol of deceit and betrayal, her presence being a constant reminder of an uneasy phase in her life which she wished to forget. But the house promotes harmony, making it necessary to forgive and forget the past in order to go on with life. By enabling her to relate to Sachi, Manjeri gets the strength to hold on to the house when intimidated by real estate brokers to sell the house. The traumatic experience that she had at night, which was at first mistaken for robbery, did nothing to weaken her. It was clear that the house, which was located at a prime site, was covetously eyed by the hawk eyed brokers. Moreover, the house was vulnerable due to the fact that "a single woman was living in it, with no male heir" (MO 140). Her unshakeable faith in herself and the courage to withstand these onslaughts, though living alone, is evidence of the strength and unselfishness which only a woman can endure for the sake of another woman. She remembers her family house in Bangalore and how it was Gayatri who was the silent force behind keeping the house that way. RK was more comfortable with his position as a senior

bureaucrat and so at home, it was through Gayatri that he connected to the everyday world of people. But “the entire household revolved around RK. Gayatri arranged it that way, but he never seemed to be aware of it” (MO 77).

In CUBD, though a crime thriller, the hold of the ancestral house on the female characters Kshama and Devyani is evident. They are full fledged characters while others like Kshama's brother Prathap pales into insignificance in the presence of his sister. Kshama harbours feelings of resentment against her brother because, as a son, he was always given preference at home. The thought of her mother filled her with disgust. Kshama was sixteen when Prathap was born and it had somehow seemed a disaster for her, her rage directed against her mother, “the sight of her nursing the baby, the smell of the room in which she lay, had filled her with disgust” (CUBD 92). She was encouraged by her father to have ambitions and to pursue them boldly. But she was jealous of Prathap because she felt that he was a threat: “My son...the way Appa had said these words somehow diminished her. It had struck terror in her. Did'nt I matter at all? Don't I count anymore?” (CUBD 92) She was very much attached to her father and resented any attention given to him by her father. She is filled with

remorse when it was he who got all the importance during the rituals after her father's death. She was not inclined to send for Prathap when her father went on asking for him as he lay in his deathbed. She did so rather reluctantly, hating Prathap for this: "She it was who was always close to Appa, she, on whom Appa had pinned his hopes and ambitions. And yet, in the end, it was Prathap he had wanted and Prathap who had lit the fire and set him free" (CUBD 96). She is flooded with a sense of alienation, of not being included in the family as she recollects the past in this way:

It had been some solace to see how confused Prathap was, how unable to cope with the fact of the dying body that was his father. Yet, after Appa died, it was all Prathap's show. No, not Prathap really, but 'the son'. Even Prathap's shaven head had outraged her; it so obviously linked him to the dead man. While I? There's nothing left of all that there was between Appa and me...  
(CUBD 95)

In the novels of Shashi Deshpande, the ancestral house turns out invariably as the site in which the female protagonist engages in a sexual union which is outside the marital bond. The union takes place



NB - 5564

Preetha 101

TH  
IN 823.009 PRE/P

between the woman and the man who poses a threat to her in her ownership of the ancient familial structure. It is surprising that this act, which can never be justified in a society that frowns upon pre-marital or extra-marital acts of sex, seem to be fortifying to the woman, giving her access to a native strength, which hitherto she had been ignorant of in her role as the passive and submissive wife in the nuclear house. The resurgent female seems to draw a primeval force from her mate in a powerful surge of unconscious energy that it is no wonder that the male dies eventually. The physical, emotional and spiritual fulfilment she experiences through the act could be due to the alignment she achieves with the natural positioning in family life from which she was otherwise expelled by a patriarchal value system. Just as a spider, which after the copulatory act, feeds on the male, and the male, through its surrender offers nourishment to the female, the female protagonists in these novels preen themselves to carry forward the tradition and heritage of the family, evolving as the new heir to these ancestral structures. They appear to be ruthless towards any male who pose a threat in their ownership of the house. Through a physical union there is a removal of the male heir, which is a symbolic victory for the woman in the war of sexes.

Indu is the resurgent woman in RS who seems to imbibe strength through a sexual union with her cousin Naren, in her old ancestral house. Naren is rejected by the family because of his “unconventional ways.” He lived a life of his own and was cautious about relationships that curbed his freedom. He was a person without pretensions, who never tried to put up appearances. Indu, when she returns to the ancestral house after the death of Akka, wonders at his easy attitude towards life. She, who was trapped by the societal roles that she was supposed to play, wished she could be like him. It appeared quite natural when they have a physical union in the ancestral house. Indu, was frustrated by the submissive role that she had to play even during the most intimate moments with her husband, as she confides to Naren, “And now I know... it shocks him to find passion in a woman. It puts him off. When I’m like that, he turns away from me. I’ve learnt my lesson now. And so I pretend. I’m passive. And unresponsive. I’m still and dead” (RS 83). The physical union with Naren, is free of guilt with no emotional involvement. Shashi Deshpande subverts the notion of female sexuality which is often interpreted in terms of male interests and desires. The extra marital sex described by the author carries no sense of guilt. The death of Naren is symbolic because he

could have been the heir to Akka's property as he jokingly tells Indu: "I was hoping Akka would leave me all her money. But you beat me to it, you opportunistic, mercenary young woman" (RS 85). It is clear that Indu does not have any emotional attachment towards Naren but the act brings out the tremendous female power in her to the surface. She emerges powerful, her female unconscious will annihilating him in the process. It so happened that Naren was found dead in the temple tank the next day.

Madhu had a physical union with an artist, in SR when she was barely fifteen years old and this takes place in her ancestral house. This man was her father's friend who had come to comfort her when her father was dying. She felt safe by the closeness of his body when he held her tight to stop her convulsive sobs. But then, as if an ancient memory was directing her body's responses, she became aware of the pleasure as their bodies came together in union. Though Madhu responded with the instinctual female intensity, the incident was erased from her mind following the death of her father. It is years later that she comes to realize with a shock that the artist was the illegitimate son of her grandfather and that he later committed suicide by hanging himself. It is to be noted that there was no male heir in the family,

Madhu's grandfather having six daughters. Since a son, even though illegitimate, was preferred to one's own daughters in the case of property inheritance, the artist definitely posed a threat to Madhu in the ownership of the familial house. He had lived with the family for a long time though his relationship with them was never disclosed. Maybe the reckless lifestyle of the man had made the grandfather hesitant about bestowing the property on him. Though Madhu was unaware of all these facts at the age of fifteen, she had an experience with him, which is physically, emotionally and spiritually gratifying for her. Though the reason for his suicide is not clear, it comes as a sudden revelation to Madhu that the sensitive feelings of the artist must have been plagued by the guilt of the act of sex with her, which must have driven him to his tragic end. This symbolic killing has eliminated the male heir who would have possibly come in the way of Madhu's ownership of the ancestral house.

Jiji satisfied her bodily needs by visiting Raman, the tenant living upstairs in her ancestral house. She justifies this as "drinking water when you are thirsty" (MO 259). It is surprising that she is always harsh with him, allowing no room for any emotional involvement. She makes it almost a mechanical process reducing him

to a mere functional being. She is the one who is completely in control, strictly laying down the rules:

New rules for this new territory. He can never come into my house, it is I who will go to him. He can never approach me, he can never ask me any questions. He has to wait for me to go to him, the decision will be mine, mine alone. ( MO 258)

The feminine strength and power seems to grow in her as Raman becomes more and more subjugated. She mercilessly dominates him. “No touching, I tell him. No, I say, each time his hands try to move over my body. No, I say when his lips come fearfully, eagerly, close to mine” ( MO 258). Her emotional detachment makes her ruthless in her attitude towards him. Later, when he is suspected of having connections with the real estate agents, he is asked to vacate the house and no amount of pleading on his part moves her. She dismisses him without any compunction. It has to be remembered that Jiji was constantly pestered by real estate agents to sell the house and she was even attacked at night, in a bid to frighten her into selling the house. Later, Raman was suspected of having connections with these people. With immense courage she held on to the house. If Raman stood in

the way, posing a threat to her in the ownership of the house, she was merciless towards him. The feminine libido seems to be overpowering to the male member as is evident from the way Raman is reduced to a weakling in her presence. He finally disappears from the scene. The 'death' of Raman is significant because he could have forcefully taken the house away from her through the real estate agents. It can be seen that Jiji subdues him and throws him away. The 'death' of Raman keeps the house safe in her hands. It required immense courage on her part but she was ready to go to any extent to preserve the house for Sachi, her sister's daughter who was the heir according to Jiji's father's will.

Sarita returns home after the death of her mother, the mother whom she had hated because of her preference for her little brother Dhruva for the only reason that he was a boy. Their relationship had become more strained after the death of Dhruva when he was drowned in a pool of water. In a fit of hysteria the mother accused Sarita of killing the boy. Later, she became a doctor and married a man of a lower caste, all in the hope of shocking her mother. Her mother died of cancer, never calling upon her daughter who was a doctor. But after fifteen years, the magnetic pull of her familial house becomes

so overpowering that she succumbs to it, coming home to her father. Her father had Madhav, a young college student staying with him. As she watches the ease with which he moved about the house and helped Baba at the same time, she becomes aware of a pang of jealousy in her. It is at this juncture that there occurs a seemingly callous thought of curing herself by passing on her suffering to Madhav by seducing him. The provocation for this thought was the memory of an incident when she was a medical student. Three sisters—the youngest only ten—had been brought to the hospital suffering from syphilis. Sarita, a medical student, had listened in horror to the mother saying that it was the father who had done it. He had tried the ancient prescription for his own disease, that of having intercourse with a virgin....the virgins being his own young daughters. It is this memory which induces Sarita to have thoughts of seducing Madhav:

But now she thought, looking at Madhav, if I imagined that by sleeping with you, I could cure myself, would I not try to seduce you? But maybe, Madhav would then look at her with the eyes of those three girls and their mother, reminding her each time that she had defiled innocence. And anyway it was not that disease that she

was suffering from. And even your clean young body cannot bring back grace to my tired, shamed one, she thought wearily. (TDHT 149)

These thoughts of Sarita are significant as far as the sexual contact between the possible male heir and the woman protagonist is concerned. Madhav could possibly become the heir to the ancestral home since Dhruva, the legitimate male heir had died in childhood. It was customary to adopt a boy child in the absence of a male heir in the family, due to the fear of the family tradition coming to an end, leading to the tragic state of 'kulanagam', as mentioned earlier. It has to be noted that Sarita is disturbed to find male clothes in her room, when she returns after fifteen years. She quickly steps out of the room when her father calls out to her saying that it is Madhav's room. "She got out feeling oddly disturbed, as if the consciousness of her desertion had only just come to her" (TDHT 19). There is the same feeling of jealousy towards Madhav just as she had towards her little brother Dhruva before he was drowned. She watched silently as Madhav, a stranger to the family, looked after the needs of her father.

The childish grief of being unwanted swamped her unreasonably again and again. Looking at Baba and

Madhav together, she felt stricken anew. There was something in Madhav, a kind of breeding or training maybe, which made it effortless and natural for him to look after the older man. Little things she would never have thought of, never have done. (TDHT 83)

A vague feeling of uneasiness stirs in her, making her apprehensive that Madhav could possibly be a threat to her in the ownership of the family house. It is this fear of exclusion which induces her to harbour deadly thoughts against him, even to the extent of seducing him to pass on her suffering to him, if that was possible. If weakening him by passing on her misery to him would make her robust, ready to be the heir to the structure, then she was capable of even that. Though these evil thoughts are dismissed immediately, Shashi Deshpande, through the articulation of such hidden feelings in these women, seems to give an indication of the simmering revolt deep inside them, a cry for justice, which cannot be dismissed as of no consequence.

Madhu is staying with Hari and his wife Lata who have offered Madhu their home in Bhavanipur, where she had gone to write the biography of Savitri Bai Indorekar. Hari is a very quiet and

undemanding person, while Lata's personality pervades the house, a house which reminds Madhu of her own ancestral house, with its many rooms and innumerable doors. Hari later discloses the fact that his grandmother and Madhu's grandmother were sisters, the family consisting of six daughters. The family did not have a male heir other than the illegitimate son, the artist who, as mentioned earlier, had committed suicide. There was every possibility of Hari becoming the heir, since the daughters did not count in the pattern of lineage. The daughter's son was preferred to one's own daughter when it came to inheriting the property. Hence it is no wonder that Madhu harboured an unconscious desire to subjugate Hari. This manifests itself when Hari tries to console her when she is sobbing over the memory of the death of her son Adit. When she felt his arms going about her, she draws back fiercely, violently pushing him away. Later she tries to analyse her response, hating herself for it.

The problem lies in me. It's my own self I hate, my own face I can't bear to see in the mirror. It's not only that I imagined something that was'nt there—Hari's touch was the touch of compassion, no more than that—its my own response that has shaken me. (SR 307)

Maybe this is only a rational explanation on the part of Madhu to find fault with herself. But the acts of sexual union in the other novels of Shashi Deshpande were only extensions of similar situations. There is protest in these novels in the surface acceptance, the archetype of the ancestral home helping to bring out the elements of the inner world into consciousness. The house envelopes the women into its warmth when they turn away from patriarchal exploitation, sharing with them a semiotic lesbian continuum constituting a form of resistance, where they are united together by a common desire, the desire for the death of the male heir. This death wish, present in the unconscious of all the female protagonists is a revolt against gender discrimination. Shashi Deshpande's novels seem to point out that even though it is the man who builds the physical part of the house, making it strong, it is the women who are the life giving force. The physical structure has a masculinity about it, being designed and constructed by men keeping in mind the fact that it should endure for generations to come. A lot of effort has gone into the building of the ancestral structures in all the novels, but these houses would degenerate into empty shells without their women characters. The woman represent the soul of these structures. She gives the house a character and is the

one who feels the vibrations of the house. She is the driving force and creative energy in these households, and attributes qualities to the house, giving them life. It can be noticed that she is the one who listens to the tick tock of the old grandfather clock as though it is the “feeble heartbeat of the old house” (RS 6), or the musical tinkle of the wind in the chandelier. The mild fragrance of champak flowers from the courtyard or the pungent odour of children’s urine on the old mattress bring nostalgic memories to her mind.

The physical union of the female protagonist, outside the marital bond, takes place in the ancestral house, which can be seen as an act which subverts the male ideology, a refusal to abide by the Law of the Father. Female sexuality is a sphere where there are lots of restrictive taboos and stifling codes of behaviour. It is considered as something to be perpetually denied, controlled or channelled into socially acceptable—that is, utilitarian—forms. Desire becomes constituted by the Law of the Father that constantly invokes it in order to deny or control its free expression, to make it serve the needs of legitimate procreation. Male domination has often required the subordination and control of female sexuality and hence the extramarital sexual act in these novels is a strategy of resistance to

male authority. In SR, Madhu has a sexual union with the artist, her father's friend, when she was barely fifteen. Years later, her husband is not able to accept the incident because the cultural, religious and social traditions considered a woman's body pure as long as it is untouched by man. For him, by experiencing sex before marriage, the body had been violated, 'offered' to a man once and hence bound for good. As suggested by Simone de Beauvoir, "the young girl has hardly more than her body which she can call her own: it is her greatest treasure: the man who enters her takes it from her;...she is overpowered, forced to compliance, conquered" (de Beauvoir 405).

Woman is defined as the receiver of man's provocation to pleasure rather than an initiator in her own right. She is conditioned to believe that a 'good' woman has sublimated her sexuality. Any gesture of sexual attraction towards a male, even her husband, is said to lack in feminine modesty and so a woman tries to repress her sexual desires. Men have always looked upon women as objects of physical fulfilment, instilling in them the sacred duty of passively surrendering to the needs of their husbands. Even women have colluded with their own annihilation by trapping themselves in a compulsive role enactment. Woman is never recognized as a flesh and blood human

individual with urges and desires. As rightly observed by Anuradha Roy, it is considered immoral to express a woman's sexual nature within and outside the hallowed precincts of marriage since female sexuality is traditionally centered around the function of reproduction. But in the novels of Shashi Deshpande, the house promotes the woman to become the initiator in the extra marital sexual acts, the man serving as an instrument in giving her pleasure. It is depicted boldly in the latest novel MO. This role reversal is definitely shocking to a patriarchal society, which has succeeded in effacing female identity, with women passively accepting the female role, sexuality remaining phallogentric. In MO, Jiji eagerly responds to her irresistible passion towards Shyam, the photographer who sweeps her off her feet. What puzzles her is the resentment and hostility from her parents, especially her mother, who accuses her of confusing love and physical need. But there seems to be no confusion in Jiji as she thinks, "on the contrary, all the confusion had vanished. My body was clear now about what it wanted: it wanted Shyam. It wanted Shyam's love, it wanted his body. I had no doubts about it at all" (MO 187). It was Shyam who showed her the beauty of her body and to rejoice in it. As she responded to his touch, she was amazed at the pleasure it was able to

give. Her happiest days were the days spent with Shyam in Ocean Vista. Later, after Shyam's death, she is ashamed of her body's response when Raja holds her hands. She has to be defiant with Raja when he finds her going to the tenant Raman to quench her bodily thirst. She is irritated with herself for bathing three times a day, scrubbing herself as though she was trying to punish her body. She wonders:

Nature has done this badly. How can you want the act and hate the idea so much? Why am I ashamed of what I'm doing? Hiding all traces of it as if I've committed a crime, as if I've murdered someone. Like a criminal washing away the bloodstains. ( MO 260)

Indu too has similar thoughts when she goes back to the terrace where she had succumbed to her bodily desires with Naren in the early hours of dawn. She wonders whether it is the same instinct that makes a criminal go back to the scene of his crime. "But I had committed no crime. Why did we make such a monstrous thing out of this?" ( RS 154).

Patriarchy introduces a division between gender and sex where there is none, from a social point of view. This, according to Catherine

Mackinnon, is done to meet the requirements of heterosexuality, “which institutionalises male sexual dominance and female sexual submission” (Mackinnon 533). This is the situation available in a patriarchal family with its sexually differentiated roles and the principle of legitimacy, which requires that no child shall be brought into the world without a man having the role of the father. This structure of patriarchy has to be blown off from the inside which requires, as Kate Millet stresses, “a complete sexual revolution destroying the traditional taboos on homosexuality, bastardy, adolescent and pre-marital and extra-marital sex. In other words, there should be unrestricted sexuality of all kinds” (Charvet 123). The heterosexual act in these novels, outside wedlock, is with men who, incidentally pose a threat to the rightful female in the ownership of the house. Hence, the revolutionary sexual act is part of a larger battle to become head of the family by a ‘capture’ of the castle of man’s domination.

It is reminiscent of the character Sula in Toni Morrison’s novel of the same name. Sula gives expression to her own sexuality in a way in which men have done for generations; she seeks to satisfy herself not others and is willing to have sex without committing herself

emotionally to her partners, discarding them as she wishes. The act of infidelity is a strategy which undermines the Name of the Father. Sula cuts off the tip of her own finger to scare away a gang of white boys who confronted her. Her challenge to male dominated sexuality is so patent. In having sex with her close friend's husband, she strikes at the way male domination controls women's freedom and mobility, condemning them to the anguish of possessive love. Shashi Deshpande, through the extra marital act of sex, attempts to recuperate for the female protagonists a pleasure that has been erased by powerful narratives of sexual propriety. She seems to contribute to the task of demystifying women, helping them to construct an individuality even in its physical and sexual dimensions. Shalmalee Palekar analyses the importance of the extra marital sexual acts in this way :

However, these episodes are important in two ways - firstly they indicate that women's disgust with their own bodies is gradually replaced with pleasure and acceptance - an important stage in the evolution of a feminist consciousness; secondly, for a middle-class Indian woman, to write about middle class Indian women's sexuality in a non-titillating way and from the

woman's view point, is in itself a 'tactical' move against patriarchy. (Palekar 56)

The elimination of the male heir to the ancestral homes in all these novels seems to represent the realization of a hidden wish in the minds of the female for the removal of the male claimant, leading to the rights of absolute possession of the parental house in a patriarchal set up. This death wish is caused because of the circumstances in which women have been brought up. This wish will disappear only when woman is endowed with freedom and rights on par with man in the newly emerging human dispensation. The absolute property rights endowed on a man in a patriarchal society is against the ingrained quality of female unconscious and it will react in proper time with devastating effect. The wish for the death of the male heir has serious implications and disturb the relationship between the family and the very elements of air, water, fire, earth and space with which vastu shastra envisages humans to establish harmony. Only through proper empowerment of women and corrective legislature can this difficulty be overcome. This may help create a society requiring both men and women to co-operate rather than confront and overcome their egotistical urge for self assertion through annihilation of the other.

# The Extinct Law of the Father

Preetha M.M “The place of ancestral homes in the development of the female self as seen in the novels of Shashi Deshpande” Thesis. Department of English, University of Calicut, 2007

### Chapter III

#### The Extinct Law of the Father

The Law of the Father representing the Oedipal Law is accepted as the law of the society by conventional psychologists. The Oedipal Law is acquired when the boy child, as he grows up, distances himself from the mother and identifies himself with the father, the process allowing him to enter into the symbolic role of manhood. Freud points to how this surmounting of Oedipus complex makes him a gendered subject, his development and growth within those images and practices which his society happens to define as 'masculine'. The father signifies what Lacan calls the Law and it is this Symbolic Order that becomes the Law of Society. Hence in the Lacanian concept, the phallus is the master signifier, in the face of which the feminine can be defined only as lack. So, in a patriarchal society, woman is a gap, a silence repressed in the unconscious.

Feminists like Kristeva and Irigaray do not agree with this. For, first of all, paternity cannot be perceived, proven, known with certainty. It is based on the fragile judgement of the mother's word. Secondly, they object to the idea of woman being a gap. But according to Indian philosophy, they need not be so perturbed because this gap

is considered to be highly creative. Buddha calls it 'Sunyata' but not in the sense as people ordinarily understand it. This 'Sunyata' is the centre of creation and it is what Shankaracharya later calls as 'Nirguna Brahman'. The Shakti tradition of Indian philosophy calls this as 'Adi Parashakti'.

It is this 'parashakti', or in the words of Kristeva, the repressed semiotic unconscious that manifests itself in the form of the ancestral house in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. The feminine semiotic pervades the dimly lit interiors of these old structures in such a way that the Symbolic Order is relegated to the periphery. In these novels, it is the Father's Law which confines men, making them aliens in their own houses. The Symbolic Law becomes helpless, unable to repress the primeval energy of the feminine semiotic. The Father's Law does not seem to have much significance in the domestic world of Shashi Deshpande's novels, which evidently leads to a disempowering of men. The men here are not able to relate to the ancestral houses since they have moved out of their mother's world in order to abide by the Law of the Father. It has been observed by Nancy Chodorow that women seek intimacy by recreating with their babies the symbiotic bonds they first enjoyed with their mothers. In

The Reproduction of Mothering, she argues:

Mothering involves a woman in a double identification, with her mother and with her child, in which she repeats her own mother-child history. This results in a stronger bond between mother and daughter than between mother and son. In contrast mothers encourage their sons to differentiate themselves from their mother and develop a masculine identity based on their father or father substitute. (Chodorow 168)

This differential resolution of the Oedipus Complex in girls and boys promote women to have a range of deep relationship with not only their children, but also with other women. According to Chodorow, men lack this extended personal relations women have among themselves. This accounts for the alienation of men from the semiotic world of the ancestral home in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. Men do not have the sense of belonging to this home-woman bond, which is analogous to the mother-daughter bond since the “masculine sense of self” is separate; “the feminine sense of self remains connected to others in the world” (Chodorow 169).

The male heir to the ancestral house in all the novels of Shashi

Deshpande is somehow or the other incapacitated in shouldering the responsibility of the ancient dwelling. He is the mentally retarded boy who gets lost as in AMT, or a wayward son as in RS, or an illegitimate son who commits suicide as in SR, or a frightened boy who gets drowned in a pool of rainwater as in TDHT, or a boy who is overlooked because of a more significant female heir as in MO. The male heir is rendered incapable, which necessitates the entry of the woman to occupy the central position, carrying forward the tradition of the family. The misfortune that befalls the male heir paves the way for the powerful female to occupy the position, with the reins of control safe in her hands. We do not know what the condition would have been if the male heir were competitive. It could be that it is the author's wish for the female dominance that reveals itself in different ways through the various incapacities of the male heirs. This wish involves no hatred towards the male but a resistance to the existing norms in society which always favours man.

Freud considers dreams as the outlet for repressed desires. His theory of dreams is reinterpreted as a textual theory by Lacan. The unconscious hides meaning in symbolic images since it cannot reveal material which might be shocking to the 'ordered' and 'rational'

symbolic. Hence this hidden meaning has to be deciphered from the text. The incapacitated male, paving the way for the female in all the novels of Shashi Deshpande becomes relevant in this context, carrying an important message which cannot be ignored. This can be analysed by Freud's psycho-sexual theory, which was developed in order to understand mentally disturbed patients, who seemed to deviate from the pattern of the normal acquisition of gender identity. The then existing methods could not account for the psychosomatic symptoms, exhibited by middle class women patients in late nineteenth century Vienna. Freud analysed the patients using the techniques of free association, hypnosis and the analysis of dreams and parapraxes. He developed a theory of gender acquisition which made gendered subjectivity the key to identity. The problems in the early acquisition of feminine and masculine subjectivity seemed to cause psychic disturbance in later life. He claimed that infants were neither feminine nor masculine in the initial stage, but acquired psychic femininity or masculinity as a result of the repression of the child's initial bisexuality which was not compatible with the sexual identity in question. Chris Weedon explains this process:

The acquisition of sexual identity involved the formation

in the individual of the unconscious as the site of socially taboo desires which, psychoanalysis claims, constantly seeks to disrupt conscious life and are responsible for the meaning of dreams and parapraxes as well as for psychic disorders. (Weedon 46)

A dream or wish for the death of the male heir surfacing in all the novels of Shashi Deshpande assumes significance in this context. It must have had its origin very early in the life of the author. This dream shatters the symbolic aspect of language giving expression to the semiotic—to use Kristeva's definitions of respectively of ordered outward structure of language and the one of 'displacement, slippage and condensation'.

Woman is never considered when it comes to carrying forward the family tradition. She is expelled from property inheritance and denied a position in the family tree. As a writer with serious humanistic concerns, the gender inequality prevalent in society is definitely unsettling for her. The elimination of the male is a symbolic destruction of injustice in society.

Shashi Deshpande observes in her article, "The Power Within", that she is acutely aware that all good writing is socially committed

writing, as it comes out of a concern for the human predicament. The subversive text in the novels of Shashi Deshpande seems to present a woman centered world where the power of the patriarchal system is losing its hold. It is also worth noting that while the male heir dies, it is the women who are blamed for it. This could be the result of an intuitive reaction by others to the deep lying wish in them for the death of the male heir. Shripati finds fault with Kalyani for losing the child at the busy railway station whereas Sarita's mother places the entire blame on Sarita for taking her brother to the lonely orchard on a rainy day, where he was drowned in a pool of water. Shripati and Sarita's mother are agents of patriarchy, who in turn, victimise the female protagonists – the one his wife and the other her daughter. The losing of the mentally retarded boy causes suffering not only to Kalyani, his mother, but also to the two daughters Premi and Sumi. The intensity of agony is reflected in Premi's words when she wonders whether her brother was alive. "He will be nearly forty now-if he's alive. Each time I see a beggar I think-maybe that's my brother. There's an idiot near the Siddhi Vinayaka temple. I've stopped going there now, because whenever I see him, I think-that's him..."(AMT 141). This makes clear that they would never have turned murderous. They

would have done everything to save the boy, the male heir, as Sarita did in the case of Dhruva. The wish is psychological and desires only the removal of a social obstacle to self - expression and fulfilment. It could be because of this that Kalyani and Sarita do not destroy themselves by feelings of guilt. Of course they suffer a lot but they do not allow the pangs of guilt to annihilate them. In fact, the women, Indu, Kalyani, Sarita, Jaya and Jiji emerge powerful in the course of time to evolve as guardians of the great tradition of their parental homes.

Naren, in RS, is alienated from the spirit of the house. He feels like an outsider in the domineering presence of the family matriarch Akka who is in control of the household. Staying in a room at the other end of the town, he appears only at times. It is evident that he is not able to blend with the atmosphere of the old house. He, with his unconventional ways, is not considered fit enough to take up the responsible task of becoming the heir to the property. The very fact that Akka does not consider him while bestowing the property points to the peripheral position that he is made to occupy, especially in the powerful presence of Indu, the emerging female heir to the ancient house. Indu, who had left home promising never to return, immediately

responds to Akka's summons. Naren teases Indu:

You leave home swearing eternal enmity against the old woman. And she hates you too. And then you come home after ten years and she suddenly dies, leaving you all her property. Come on, Indu, come clean. What did you do? Undue influence? Poison? (RS 86)

Naren is obviously puzzled since he cannot comprehend the deep bonding of these two women with the ancient house, which had prompted Akka to choose Indu as the heir, and Indu to respond with sincerity. Naren appears to be an outsider, unable to enter into this unique relationship. He is said to have been a lonely boy, frightened of water, maybe due to the fact that both his parents were drowned. Indu's father wonders why he had suddenly started bathing in the temple tank. He tells Indu how, as a child, "it was an ordeal inducing him to have his bath. As for swimming...whether in a pool or lake, river or the sea...it was unthinkable. And now he goes to bathe in that tank everyday" (RS 173). The next evening, Vithal comes home from school bringing the news that somebody has drowned in the tank near the Shiva temple. Indu later analyses her response to the situation and doubts whether she had a premonition of the death,

as she thinks:

What made me so certain? I don't know. I only know that in that instant, even as I heard the women murmur and exclaim over the news, I knew who it was. And all the blood in my body drained away. Drained back to the heart which worked like some monstrous pump. (RS 175)

The orphan boy Vithal who lived in the family house was brought from the streets by Kaka. He had run away from his cruel father and was found scavenging in the dustbin outside a shabby restaurant. Realising from his sacred thread that he was a Brahmin, he was brought home where he stayed doing odd jobs. Later Old Uncle discovered that he was interested in studies and so was sent to school. But the women in the household were not very fond of this boy who was all the time absorbed in his studies, without being much use to the family members. It is possible that the women saw him as a threat to the ownership of the house which made them despise him. Indu, after she becomes the heir, jokingly tells Naren that she would like to give the property to Vithal just to shock the other family members. But Vithal is a silent and lonely boy, unable to imbibe the values for which the house stood. He is content to sit in a corner with his books.

The same is the case with Indu's father, who is only an occasional visitor to the house. He had left the motherless Indu in the old house to be looked after by the family members there.

Dhruva, in TDHT is the meek boy who is terrified of darkness. It is ironic that his mother made him sleep alone in a room at night, "imagining herself to be Jijabai, the heroic mother who moulded the brave son Shivaji" (TDHT 84). But the frightened boy waited till his mother was asleep and then crawled into Saru's bed without waking his mother. Saru is filled with contempt for the meekness that he showed and made no attempt to hide her feelings. No amount of coaxing or scolding brought any change in him. Being the male heir to the house, he was pampered by his mother which made Saru hate him even more. Though pampered and trained by his mother, the boy Dhruva did not seem to imbibe the values of the house. A silent noon after meals, while the family members were in an afternoon siesta, Dhruva met with his death. He had followed his elder sister Sarita to the mango orchard, which was forbidden territory. It was a fearful, terrible place to Sarita because of a vague reputation. Children used to warn each other in whispers that one could be kidnapped from there, and "worse things could happen to girls" (TDHT 184). Sarita

decided to venture to this place because she was angry with her mother for not allowing her to go for a movie with her friend Smita and her family. If she got kidnapped, so much the better and it gave her satisfaction to imagine her mother's distress when they would start searching for her. Dhruva, the stubborn, pampered child decided to go with her, not listening to her when she tried to dissuade him. The mango orchard was once a place of activity with the busy hub of a brick making industry. But now it was a desolate deserted place, the ground muddy and slippery with tufts of grass treacherously giving way. The rains had turned a part of the hollow into a sort of lake, the finding of which excited the two children, and they played games by throwing stones and sailing twigs and dried leaves. Suddenly they realised it was getting dark and as they were about to return, Dhruva decided to build Shivaji's fort with the wet mud. It started raining and no amount of coaxing would make Dhruva leave the place. Sarita started climbing up the slope, hoping that he would follow, when he suddenly fell into the water. Terrified and desperate, she ran back, waded into the water to rescue him, when her foot gave way. She regained her balance, realising with a shock that the shallow water concealed a deeper pond, which she came to know later, had been

dug by the brick worker for soaking bricks. Her agitation is evident:

I knelt down now, reaching out, trying to hold on to something, feeling sure each time it was him. His leg. His arm. His shirt. His hair. Again and again I clutched at something that evaded me and finally turned out to be not Dhruva after all. And all the time there was a despairing feeling that Dhruva was trying to pull me down to him. I was sobbing now in jerky gasps, gulping, struggling, frantically trying to hold on to something...

(TDHT 189)

Returning to the house, Sarita's mother, in a bout of hysteria, accused her of killing the boy. The death of Dhruva eliminates the male heir to the family house. Saru comes back home after fifteen years, as the new heir to the ancient house after the mother's death.

Madhav is the young Brahmin boy staying in the house of Sarita, after her mother's death. Since he was alone, her father had allowed this boy, a college student, to stay in the house, to keep him company. He is the son of a priest, the eldest child in the family with many sisters and brothers. Being the eldest child, he had many roles thrust upon him which irritates him. He resents his mother's claims on him

as the eldest child, expecting him to go in search of his younger brother Satish, when he runs away from home. He is not interested in puja and is critical of his father's obtuseness and aloofness from the family. Though he hated his father's superiority, he felt he had no right to intervene in his father's handling of his brother Satish. Madhav has, in fact, moved out of the role designated for him by his father and hence is a rebel in his family. Both Saru's father and Madhav seemed to have dismissed gods and pujas from their lives with an ease that surprises Saru. She notices that the puja room is denuded of the gods to which her mother had so ardently prayed. As far as Sarita is concerned, the boy functions as a bridge, giving her access to her house, the house which she had detested in her childhood. The tall and colourful hollyhocks that have bloomed in a corner of the yard, the yard which had always been bare, "the ground beaten down to a smooth hardness, in which nothing grew, not even weeds" (TDHT 15), seems to give an indication of the change that is to come to her. The flowers and Madhav's act of planting them acquire a symbolic significance as it is through Madhav that Sarita is able to access the house, which in turn influences her to replace self blame with investment in the present. Somehow Madhav reminds her of her dead

brother Dhruva and hence the stay with him, helps her to confront the terrors of the past. In Madhav's company, Sarita is able to see her father in a new light. He is actually a very loving person, though distant to her. She is able to confide all her problems to her father, the trauma of her brother's death and also about the sexual sadism of her husband. It is through the house that Sarita is able to relate to her dead mother, making her aware of a strong link between herself and her mother. This powerful semiotic bonding between Sarita and her dead mother seems to be promoted by the old house helping her overcome her ordeal in life. As she evolves as the new heir to the structure, Madhav and her father seem to be relegated to the background.

Balkaka, in BV, is the illegitimate son of Urmi's grandfather. Like the artist in SR, he lived in the family house and is evidently attached to the place. Urmi, who grew up in the Ranidurg House with her grandmother Baiajji and Balkaka had collected the background story from Balkaka and Papa. Urmi's mother Inni hated him, because of Balkaka's grandmother, who was Baiajji's father's mistress "a skeleton in the family cupboard, something to be discreetly concealed" (BV 96). Baiajji's mother was a shy withdrawn woman whose only oddity was

her fear of widowhood, which increased as the years went by. This unnatural fear took its firm hold on the woman and she became convinced that she is a widow after the birth of Baiajji. She took to all the rituals of widowhood by giving up jewels and kumkum. When they did not allow her to wear the coarse red saree of a widow, she remained stubbornly nude. So her husband had locked her up in a room where she was looked after by Sakubai. It was she who looked after the baby and her husband, later becoming his mistress and having a daughter by him, Balkaka's mother, Saroj. Sakubai looked after Baiajji with affection and Baiajji in turn showered her affection on Sakubai's grandson, Balkaka. He was like a son to her and allowed him to stay in the house when he became ill. It can be noticed that the artist in SR, though illegitimate, is the only male in the family and so posed a threat in the ownership of the house. But in BV, Balkaka does not pose a threat since Baiajji had a son, Urmi's father. But Papa is aware of the strong liking Baiajji had towards Balkaka, as he says to Urmi, "Baimavshi made this my home, she made no difference between me and your father, not once" (BV 97). It is possible that he sent his daughter Urmi to stay there as part of laying a claim on the house. After the death of Baiajji, her husband commits suicide by hanging himself and Balkaka, who was ill, stays alone in the house.

The Law of the Father had been stable in Mohan's family, in TLS, but the Dadar flat seems to weaken it in the all pervading feminine consciousness of Jaya, the heir to the Dadar flat. In the other novels, the husband does not accompany the wife when she returns to the ancestral house. But here Mohan comes with Jaya to the Dadar flat to escape temporarily from a money scandal. Though a domineering husband he appears to be a little helpless in this place whereas Jaya seems to be empowered. Mohan's mother had been the long suffering Indian wife, uncomplainingly bearing the burden of her husband's harshly imposed authority over his household. The father had been an unrelenting autocrat, demanding that fresh food should be served to him whatever time he chose to return home. His wife's failure to provide fresh chutney late one night had driven him to wild fury. He created a commotion and the woman ground the chutney impassively at that late hour. Mohan, as he narrated this, talked of the "great strength" of his mother, but Jaya found in her "a despair so great that it would not voice itself" (TLS 31). The male attitude of superiority is evident in Mohan's attitude to Jaya's writing career. It is he who sets the parameters for the kind of writing his male ego and the norms of male-dominated society might permit her to indulge in.

He boasts, “from the very beginning I’ve allowed you to write, I’ve encouraged you, I was proud of you” (TLS 119), but actually his wife’s writing was only an extension of his own status. He is shocked when she won a prize for the story of “a man who could not reach out to his wife except through her body” (TLS 144). He is ashamed and embarrassed that people would think that the man is he himself. Stricken with guilt, Jaya quits writing. Gradually, she allows herself to slide into prescribed behavioural patterns, remoulding herself by suppressing her real self. But the Dadar flat seems to have a maternal nourishing effect on Jaya, empowering her during the stay there. Mohan leads a quiet existence here, hoping that the money scandal at the office will be solved soon.

Gopal is evidently an outsider in AMT. He was living in the outhouse of The Big House, but later, after marrying Sumi, they moved to a nuclear house. Three daughters were born to them, but Gopal was filled with a sense of loneliness, as though he was an outsider in their company. He muses:

For I knew, when I looked at them, that they belonged together as I never did. Even when Sumi was impatient, when she showed a flash of temper as she often did for

being deprived of her sleep, they were together in that magic circle. Woman and child. And I was outside. A man is always an outsider. (AMT 68)

He is disturbed that for a woman, pregnancy and motherhood gave her justification for living, whereas, "A man has to search for it, always and forever" (AMT 68). It is such thoughts of life that make him leave his family to live a life of loneliness in a rented room with the bare facilities that are required for him. There does not seem to be any obvious reasons for Gopal's walking out on his family. He appears to be hesitant, not sure whether he will be able to convince anyone the reason for isolating himself from his wife and daughters. When Sumi's sister Premi keeps on probing he says that he can give her many answers but the plain truth is that "I just got tired" (AMT 133). Gopal is not angry with Sumi but grateful to her for not asking questions, thus saving him the embarrassment of voicing half - truths. Gopal, the idealist, realizes the futility of existence when the life he is leading appeared unreal to him and he knows that he cannot go on. It is interesting to note that Gopal, in his childhood, nurtured feelings of desolation when, his father took his brother's widow for marriage and he was born of that union. He is always disturbed by this concept

though his adolescent mind tries to think of several possible reasons for the marriage. His predicament and inner conflict carries echoes of the struggle of Hamlet:

It was when I read Hamlet, fortunately much later, that the most terrible version of my parents' story entered my mind. Just that once, though for I slammed the door on it immediately. In this story my father became a man succumbing to his passion for his brother's wife, the woman compliant, a pregnancy and a child to come and then, after the husband's convenient death (no, I could'nt, I just could'nt make my father poison his brother) a marriage of convenience. (AMT 43)

Gopal's tentativeness, his emotional uncertainty, the childhood experiences all add up to his difficult predicament. After leaving his wife and daughters, he stays in a single room with the bare necessities, which is similar to the life that he led in the outhouse of The Big House. It is also reminiscent of Shripati's lonely existence in the single room upstairs which makes him alienated from the rest of the household. Kalyani, Sumi and the three daughters live in harmony with the Big House, whereas Shripati is unable to enter into this

bonding shared by Kalyani, Sumi and Sumi's three daughters. Even Kalyani's dead mother Manorama, whose picture hangs on the wall, seems to be one with them, "connecting the different generations, creating a sense of continuity in the house" (AMT 70). Shripati's isolation is complete and through his life as an exile, he was trying to punish his wife Kalyani for losing their mentally retarded son, the male heir to the family. One cannot help wondering whether it is Kalyani or in reality Shripati himself who is being victimized. Tracing his childhood, we understand that he lost his mother when he was a year old. Belonging to a poor family, the only redeeming factor in the life of this motherless boy was the help from his eldest sister Manorama who had married the rich, educated and affectionate Vithalrao. Though the boy was silent and withdrawn, he was ambitious and intelligent and with the good education he received, became a lawyer. It was his indebtedness to them that made him agree to marry their only daughter Kalyani. He was aware of his sister's disappointment in not being able to give birth to a son, who would be the heir to Vithalrao's property. She had moulded her brother Shripati to carry forward the family tradition. She seemed terrified and insecure when Vithalrao was asked by the elderly members of the family to

marry again in order to have a son, or to adopt a boy from his side of the family. Shripati's sense of loyalty made him agree to a loveless marriage with his own sister's daughter. They had two girls and a son. Though mentally retarded, he could see his son as the male heir, who would carry forward the tradition of the family. So when the four year old boy was lost at the railway station, he went about the city like a mentally deranged person, looking for him. Having lost the boy forever, he deserted Kalyani. It was Manorama, who coaxed him to return to The Big House, hurriedly building a room upstairs for him. Thus Shripati, again due to his sense of loyalty towards his sister, returned to stay in this room upstairs, cutting himself away from the rest of the family. It is clear that Kalyani is distressed about his return:

It was when the builders came to build a room upstairs that Kalyani realized Shripati would be coming back to live with them. She lay awake at nights, terrified, waking out of fearful dreams when she did finally fall asleep, her body drenched in sweat. (AMT 153)

Her future was uncertain. Kalyani would lose the property if Shripati marries again or if he gives the house by will to Nikhil,

Kalyani's other daughter Premi's son. Evidently, Shripati is fond of his grandson Nikhil, who always visits him in the lonely room upstairs. His running up and down the stairs helps to "create a link between the room and the rest of the house, so that they seem to come together even if only temporarily" (AMT 131). Kalyani is troubled by such thoughts but later, Shripati, with his lonely existence seems to be the one who is victimized. He had given up his ambitions, his career and his family life to go through a death in life existence. Kalyani's nonchalant attitude to his misery might be due to a resignation on her part to an uncertain, indecisive future involving the possible resolution of the question of heirship of the house. She on her part is playing a waiting game. Shripati, whether he is aware of it or not, does not seem to succeed in inflicting punishment on his wife, who appears surprisingly unscathed by his treatment of her for losing the son. Shripati must have felt that he had failed in his duty towards his sister Manorama and this made him withdraw into a shell which he himself had created. He is the one who has been incapacitated in life since Kalyani has blotted out the very existence of Shripati, easily accepting her fate, undeterred either by Shripati's attitude to her or by the tragedy of losing her son, the male heir to the family. Shripati's existence is

no more important to her than “to keep the kumkum intact and to move in the company of women with the pride of a wife” (AMT 167). He is confused that Kalyani never tries to defend herself offering an explanation for losing the child. She dismisses Shripati altogether, immersing herself in the various household activities, her presence pervading the house. She seems to retain her identity only as the daughter of Manorama and Vithalrao, completely erasing her life as the wife of Shripati.

The men are alienated from the spirit of the house and they occupy a peripheral position in the presence of the feminine aura of the interiors of the ancient houses. The artist in SR, who is the illegitimate son of Madhu’s grandfather may have been bestowed with the property. But just as in the other novels of Shashi Deshpande, this male heir too lacks the strength of character to shoulder the responsibility of the familial house. He leads a reckless life and later commits suicide by hanging himself. He has a sexual relationship with Madhu when she was barely fifteen, but surprisingly it is the man who undergoes guilt and suffering here. Under the Law of the Father, the male has always determined what should be considered as the norm. Woman has been constructed as man’s ‘other’ and the

tentacular grip of patriarchal ideology inevitably victimizes woman. But as in the other novels of Shashi Deshpande it is the artist, here, who undergoes the agony of guilt leading him to the act of committing suicide by hanging himself. The latest novel MO presents an interesting situation where the house goes to the illegitimate daughter, Sachi, overlooking Jiji's legitimate son, Anand, the reason being already mentioned. Anand does not have a significant role here other than giving advice to Sachi. Jiji's father Baba, is there throughout but he is only a silent observer. It is through the writings in his diary that even Jiji becomes aware of the sensitivity and compassion that her father has towards the family.

Raja the architect and Venkat the police officer in MO, are both childhood friends and relatives of Jiji. Though very protective of her, it can be observed that they are not able to attain oneness with the feminine unconscious pervading the house. They are rendered powerless in the strong presence of Jiji, who, with her immense reservoir of strength holds on to the house for the sake of Sachi. It is the same protective mothering instinct in her that she had originally felt towards Malu that she now shows towards Sachi. Even Anand, her own son is not able to enter into this unique bonding as is evident

from his remote presence throughout. It is always Jiji who is in command, warding off Raja's attention and his proposal of marriage to her. Raja has no say when Jiji dictates about living alone in the house and also about renting out the rooms upstairs to the orphan boy Raman. Even Raman, with whom she has sexual encounters seems to move according to her dictates. Shyam and Jiji shared a short but passionate life together, but were estranged due to the deceit on the part of Shyam, when he had a physical union with the unmarried Malu, making her pregnant. Here again it can be noted that the Law of the Father is enfeebled when it is the man, Shyam, who wrecks traditional family values, plunging the family in the shock of deceit. He later dies by drowning.

The importance of the mother-daughter bond is made aware in Baba, who though very much attached to his wife and two daughters, feels sometimes like an outsider in his own house. Though Jiji and her mother had a strained relationship because of Shyam, Baba is aware of an unconscious bonding between them, as he thinks:

Vasu was her mother, they had inhabited the same body for nine months. How could she cut off the roots of her own being without pain? The umbilical cord continues

to exist, a phantom link, all our lives. We can never deny the ties of the body, we can never leave them behind us. The ties we forge through our bodies are the strongest, the hardest to sever. ( MO 114)

The 'master' of the house appears helpless. His life is inextricably linked to his wife and children and so losing them makes him a broken man. Jiji observes that his sister Gayatri does not isolate herself after losing her husband RK, to whom she was very much attached. After recovering from the initial shock, she could adjust by relating to everyone, helping not only the family members but other women and children as well. Even after her death, she continued to live in the memories of the women whom she had helped while, "Baba is almost invisible" (MO 160). It is always the woman who controls life remaining at the centre, the men helping to redefine the identity of the women. In RS, Kaka and Old Uncle actually found shelter in the house, their sense of identity strictly linked to its walls. Outside, they feel lost, as Old Uncle himself admits: "Here I was safe, enclosed. I was Old Uncle here. Outside? Maybe I was afraid of finding out that I was nothing'" (RS 181).

Other than the male heir to these ancient structures, there are

men who seem to define their role only in relation to the women, helping them in restructuring their identity. Boozie, in TDHT, is the good looking professor in the medical college, who was sought after by the girls. For, “he was perilously close to a woman’s magazine hero...dark, rugged, handsome and masterful” (TDHT 88). Sarita is pleasantly surprised when he takes an interest in her, not as a student, but as a woman. She was already married to Manu and hence justifies herself thinking that it is just a teacher-student relationship, which has nothing to do with her life with Manu. She feels it is the Pygmalion-Galatea story all over again:

It was he who taught me to dress with elegance and simplicity, he who taught me how to speak good English, he who improved my accent, he who taught me how to enjoy good food, how to read and what....oh everything!  
All the small graces of living that so transform a person.  
(TDHT 91)

Manu’s salary barely covers their expenses while Sarita is craving for material prosperity. Boozie is “the fairy godfather who could, with the wave of his magic wand, make things easier, miraculously, wonderfully easier for me... if only I could please him”

(TDHT 92). She does her MD and becomes an Assistant Honorary at a suburban hospital, with a consulting room of her own. Boozie's personality crumbles after he has served the purpose of Sarita's reconstruction of her identity as a woman, a woman capable of responding to virile masculinity. Boozie becomes a weak and pathetic figure, who is after all, putting up an appearance, building up an image to be presented to the world. His interest in pretty girls is only a drama just as the façade of an affair with one of them. In reality women left him cold. But she no longer cares because "if she was a pawn in his game, so was he in hers" (TDHT 98). It is through him that she has gained access to the immense reservoir of strength in her. She dismisses him after her purpose is served.

Kamat serves as the mentor critic of Jaya in TLS. He treats her as an equal, which makes her comfortable. "With this man, I had not been a woman, I had been just myself" (TLS 153). He is there to support and encourage her in her writing. Since she is bound to the traditional role of wife, has to repress her desires from Mohan, who can see her only as the submissive wife and nothing more. But she is frightened of herself when she is filled with an overwhelming urge to respond to Kamat's caress. She abruptly walks out on him, afraid to

face the reality of her own sexual arousal by a man who is not her husband. There is an emotional detachment on the part of Jaya when she finds him dead on her next visit. She mercilessly abandons him. Kamat serves as an instrument in her self discovery. Though not a physical union, Jaya's female sexual energy has been brought to the surface through Kamat, which becomes a liberating and empowering force for her.

Bhaskar Jain, the doctor in BV, is an old friend of Urmi, a man with whom she could communicate easily, discussing the rape of Kalpana and the death of her daughter, breaking down in front of him without any embarrassment. He could relate to her sorrow as he himself had experienced the shock of bereavement when he lost his twin sister when she was hit by a bus. He is interested in music, plays the tabla and is a man of sensitivity, unlike Kishore her husband who always appeared remote and distant from her. As she narrates her past life in Ranidurg House with Baiajji, a swarm of memories descend on her, making alive each minute detail, sharing these with him. But the realisation that Bhaskar is interested in her as a woman makes her quickly withdraw from him. She does not succumb to bodily pleasure though aware of her sexuality when Kishore is away, "I often wished

I could put my desires into a deep freeze and take them out, intact and whole, when he returned” (BV 164). It is evident that the moving away from Bhaskar is not to adhere to the ‘pativrata’ role but because of her control of the situation, she reigns firmly in her hand as she moves through the network of relationships. She refuses to listen to Inni or Vanaa when they disapprove of the relationship with Bhaskar, but firmly ends it when it transgresses the limit. Jiji, in MO, takes up quite a different position by having a physical relationship with the tenant Raman, with no emotional involvement. It appears that there is no mixing up of the emotional world and the physical needs for the female protagonists in Shashi Deshpande’s novels. Here, it is the woman who decides, the female body not rendered ‘docile’ as it happens in a patriarchal set up. If the bodily needs are met by Jiji through Raman, the emotional requisite is taken care of by Kamat, Booze and Bhaskar for Jaya, Saru and Urmi respectively. Hence, in these novels, the woman does not follow any prescribed role model but is guided by a trust in one’s own intuitive powers.

The extra marital act of sex annihilates the man in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. It is interesting to note that it does not adversely affect the woman. It does not cripple her, as it usually does in a

patriarchal society. On the contrary, the woman is elevated to a state of fulfilment, with no guilt attached. Annis Pratt sees this as the awakening of the Eros, which is “ one of the primal forces leading the personality through growth towards maturity, as necessary to human development as intellectual growth and the opportunity for significant work” (Pratt 74). The men do not imbibe primeval energy from this act but rather succumb to feelings of guilt and agony, leading them to their destruction. Shashi Deshpande seems to subvert an ideology where men could enjoy unquestioned sexual freedom without any prick of conscience. The woman, whether she is waiting for the possession of her natal house, or whether she is in the act of disrupting the patriarchal taboos on female sexuality, is always dignified and sublime in these novels. It is easy to read greed or lust into such actions, if there is the slightest infelicity in them. The motivations of the characters and the appropriateness of the author’s language are remarkable in this context. As the theme of the novels is centred in these, it becomes all the more powerful by the glory of restraint and power attached to it.

# The Homecoming

Preetha M.M “The place of ancestral homes in the development of the female self as seen in the novels of Shashi Deshpande” Thesis. Department of English, University of Calicut, 2007

## 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 femininity 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 femininity. 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- Saphagiri 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 Saphagiri, 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 reminisces:

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 upto 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

# Conclusion

Preetha M.M “The place of ancestral homes in the development of the female self as seen in the novels of Shashi Deshpande” Thesis. Department of English, University of Calicut, 2007

## Conclusion

A reading of the novels of Shashi Deshpande reveals the prominent position taken up by the ancestral houses in her fictional world. It appears that the houses were not mere structures in brick and mortar, but has a close relationship with the inner world of women's experience. In the Indian context, ancestral home, with its family history, memories and myriad relationships holds a very dear place in the heart of its inhabitants. But it is inevitably the woman who gives a lot of importance to interpersonal relationships and human emotions that make a house a home. Family relationship is a tremendously intriguing and fascinating theme and it appears to be the centre of all human activities in the fictional world of Shashi Deshpande. A closer look reveals that the house, with its dimly lit interiors and memories trapped within the walls seems to represent the feminine unconscious itself, influencing the characters in various ways. The structure carries the archetype of the house which is present in the collective unconscious of women. It is the same archetype that is present in the author herself, which has seeped into her novels, maybe unintentionally. In a personal interview at her residence in Bangalore, Shashi Deshpande described her own ancestral house,

which held memories of family get togethers and festivities. But she expressed surprise at the extent to which the house occupies the space of her novels, a fact which she herself has not noticed. Hence it points to certain unconscious elements that has worked its way into her writing, revealing a feminine subtext, which emerges clearer as further reading was done. A facet that calls for attention is that the male heir to the ancestral house meets with some misfortune, which ushers in the woman as the heir to the family house. Is the misfortune a result of the projection of ill will of women characters who bear a history of centuries of injustice suffered? It may prove a difficult question to answer if somebody asks what would the course of the story have been if the male heirs were strong and efficient characters. The only answer to that question is that in the psychological set up of the novels considered here such a possibility is remote. Here in we find a close relationship with Shashi Deshpande and the other well known feminist writers and critics. All of them deserve praise for their dedication and boldness of defending the woman's cause in a world of dominant patriarchal values.

The status of women all over the world has undergone rapid changes, in recent times mainly because of their pioneering activities.

Education and economic freedom, obtained thereby, have enabled woman to emerge from her confined world making progress in all walks of life. This has widened her vision, helping her to analyse her experience and to understand the experience as crucial to her attaining freedom from the social oppression that she is being subjected to. She has felt the need to redefine her role as a woman in order to claim her rightful place both in the domestic and social sphere. But a close reading of the novels of Shashi Deshpande alerts the reader to the reality that the woman is yet to get proper recognition in the domestic sphere where she devotes most of her time and energy. The writer immerses the reader in the female community encompassing the house, captivating the reader to a journey through the inner fears, turmoils and uncertainties that these women harbour deep in their psyche. These aspects necessitate a questioning of the position of woman in society, the insecurity which has led to the anguish in her. A proper recognition of woman as a human being, endowing her the rights to which she is entitled to seems to be the only way to enable her to overcome the fears and anxieties in her mind, leading to harmony in society.

Woman has no position in the family tree and she is, most often,

excluded from property inheritance. It is a sad plight because, though she may have legal rights, the woman is hesitant to lay claims to her rights, for fear of causing family conflicts in her natal home. Later, the house into which she is married into becomes her home, where she is expected to be devoted, not only to the house but to her husband's family members. Even then, there is no question of legal rights to the property in this marital home. Woman has unquestioningly accepted such a situation because she has been conditioned to it. Sexual stereotyping is a form of psychological conditioning where the norms worked out by a particular culture through the ages work as the defining, repressive force. Anuradha Roy is of the opinion that this creates clearly defined gender identities marginalizing one group and foregrounding the other.

Sexual stereotyping is all the more dangerous because the victims are participators in their own oppression, unconsciously internalizing the very code which keeps them subjugated, trapped in an image of the ideal perpetrated through the centuries. (Roy 41)

Thus there is a psychic construction of gender identity on the basis of repression which leads to the acquiring of gendered

subjectivity and internalisation of certain norms and values. Women have no position in the symbolic order except in relation to men. Hence women's language pose a constant repressed threat to the patriarchal symbolic order. The disturbance at gender inequality, evident in the female protagonist in the novels is an echo of the discontent in Shashi Deshpande herself, which reveals itself in her novels as the 'death' of the male heir to the ancestral homes. As observed by the vastu expert Kanipayyoor Krishnan Namboodiripad, the house faces 'kulanagam', in the sense that the house does not have a male heir. But 'kulanagam' does not take place in these novels, because the woman carries forward the tradition of the house, doing justice to the responsibility that has fallen on her shoulders. Though Shashi Deshpande does not engage in an open critique of a patriarchal society, her writing disturbs the complacent certainties of patriarchal culture. The desire for the death of the male heir is not the desire for a feminist world. It is the desire for a world where injustices are remedied and man and woman become equal partners to build a new future.

The woman is evidently empowered when she comes into inheritance of the parental house in all the novels of Shashi Deshpande.

It is observed that by becoming one with the house, the woman is recreating the mother-daughter bond, from which she was earlier expelled. Nancy Chodorow stresses the importance of this kind of feminine bonding, the ancestral house promoting the woman to fall back into the collective existence of a female community, forming the "lesbian continuum," which is the sharing of a rich inner experience, according to her. The house, with its maternal nourishing qualities, envelopes the women into its warmth, uniting them in a feminine desire for the death of the male heir which seems to suffuse the interiors of the ancestral house in these novels. The incapacitated male paves the way for the female to take up heirship. The merging of identities between the mother and daughter, along with acquiring the heirship of the family house, creates new "subject position" for woman, a space from which she has been expelled by both language and society. The semiotic, acting at the level of the unconscious, seems to disrupt the rational, symbolic order of a patriarchal society, in the form of the 'death' of the male heir to the ancient house in these novels. It is the kind of revolution, as Julia Kristeva envisages, to get back her rightful position in not only her family, but language as well. Julia Kristeva addresses the working of a text's unconscious by

applying Lacan's principle of the split subject and reinterpreting the Imaginary. According to her, the semiotic can never be obliterated and so it is simultaneously present as the subtext of symbolic discourse. This semiotic material tends to disrupt the logical order of the symbolic. This wish for the death of the male heir has been analysed as a disruptive force acting at the level of the semiotic interfering with the social order of the symbolic. Shashi Deshpande's language seems to carry nuances of this semiotic, transporting the readers to the feminine world of the ancestral home which harbours a wish for the death of the male heir. This 'death' wish can be seen as a symbolic 'killing' of gender inequality, the destruction of which alone would lead to a harmonious relationship between man and woman in society. As Freud says, dreams are a manifestation of the unconscious. In the same way, the text is a manifestation of the hidden desire in the unconscious of the author. Just as woman has been denied subject position in language, she has been expelled from the family inheritance, most often denying her the rights to her home, a place where she is born and brought up. A writer with serious concerns, Shashi Deshpande is definitely disturbed by a society which does not sanction woman the privilege of inheritance to family tradition,

expelling her mercilessly from property claims. The author, in her article, 'The Power Within,' observes that her outlook on writing has undergone a change. Initially she was of the opinion that committed writing belittles the artistic value of a work because it is message oriented. But later she has realised that all good writing is socially committed writing. It is definitely her social concern which has motivated her to create a powerful female heir to all the houses in the different novels. Since only the absence of a male heir would lead to such a state of affairs, it is no wonder that the male heir to these structures are rendered incapable by mental or physical deformities. It leads to the 'death' of the male heir. Even the men who did not come into the direct line of inheritance, but who could possibly have become the heir, meet with death. Their death leads the other characters to suspect whether it is an accident or suicide. This further emphasises the weakness of character of the men. In all the deaths, the woman is implicated, she is even accused of killing the male claimant but Shashi Deshpande does not allow the woman to suffer. The woman comes out of the ordeal unscathed. She makes no attempt to defend herself of the charges levelled against her by an accusing patriarchal community. Kalyani and Sarita were made scapegoats, but both of

them emerge victorious, evolving as the female heir to the ancient house, ready to carry forward its heritage. Qualities like passivity and submissiveness have been glorified in woman only to favour man, in a patriarchal setup. The novels point to the fact that it is no longer possible for the woman to remain passive.

The extra-marital acts of sex, which take place in the ancestral home has been analysed using Kate Millet's theory of sexual politics, the politics of power-relationship in which one group of persons is controlled by another. Since most of the avenues of power are in male hands, Millet stresses that sexual politics is the politics of patriarchy. Then it is surmised that such an act, outside wedlock, is a resistance against pre-structured codes of rigid morality which inevitably favours man. The act which is outside the codes of rigid morality is a strategy to overthrow patriarchy which continues to coerce woman by a system of sex-role stereotyping to which she is subjected from an early age. Literary values and conventions have been shaped by men, women's experience going unnoticed. Shashi Deshpande, by foregrounding women's experience and sexuality has set the ground for a revolution to oust man from his complacent position and seize what is hers by due right.

The homecoming, or the return of the female protagonist to the ancestral home after a few years of married life has been given importance. In these novels, the female protagonist express a craving to return to her ancestral home even in the midst of a prosperous life with her husband and children. It has to be remembered that they had once rebelled against the same place and left by severing all ties with it, promising never to return. But the urge to return is so overpowering that they come back under some pretext or the other, leaving their comfortable nuclear homes at least for the time being. It can be surmised that this craving is in reality the need for recognition of her status in the family tree, a place from which she has been mercilessly expelled. The return to the family house after ten to fifteen years of married life is a return to the womb, a going back to one's roots to establish identity. Time stands still in the space of this womb and the protagonist undergoes regeneration here. The nuclear home, with its pre-given structure of social and sexual expectations could stand for the patriarchal symbolic order to which a woman is brought after marriage, whereas the ancestral home, the one in which she is born, stands for the pre-oedipal semiotic. That is why the female protagonist is attracted to the ancestral home, where she returns to experience the

'bliss' of pre-oedipal fusion with the mother. As observed by Lacan, the child never forgets its illusory oneness with the mother or *jouissance*, an experience before the intervention of paternal law. It is this oneness that the female protagonists experience when they return to the ancestral home and become the 'female heir' there. When given the responsibility of carrying forward the tradition and prestige of these ancient structures, they do their duty with utmost sincerity. This gives them a sense of fulfilment. Contrary to the expectation that women are content by being a wife and mother, Shashi Deshpande exposes the fact that such an image is perpetuated by a patriarchal society with vested interests. The female protagonists in the novels of Shashi Deshpande attain fulfilment only when they do justice to their duties in the familial houses. It has to be noted that this does not lead them to discard or neglect their nuclear homes.

In RS the heirship is decided by Akka and is taken up by Indu as if prompted by an intuition. Kalyani is the 'female heir' of The Big House in SR just as Sarita in TDHT, Jaya in TLS and Sachi in MO. These women, before they take up the heirship, had to face a lot of mental agitation. They were in the grip of uncertainties regarding their roles in the family, because of the prevalent patriarchal laws. Sexual

identity is always unstable and is susceptible to disruption by the unconscious and the disruption manifests itself in the form of the wish for the death of the male heir in the female protagonists. The fact that they do not get the importance they deserve both in their natal and marital home, creates disturbance in their psyche. Though they become the 'heir' due to some misfortune in the family, urging them to take up such a position, they get immense satisfaction in fulfilling their duty towards their familial structures, to which they had a deep affinity. Perhaps the extramarital sexual act in the ancestral home could be deemed even as the delivery of woman from marital bondages and her emergence as a wider social factor. They happily return to their husband and children when they get the deserved recognition in their familial houses. It is only then that they are able to do justice to their role even in the nuclear home. Shashi Deshpande seems to show that it is only when women get proper appreciation as a human being are they able to willingly do justice to their duties in the nuclear home. This does not mean that woman should be given more importance than men. It is equality for both men and women in the domestic and social sphere that is the aim of feminists all over the world.

In the Indian tradition, power itself is deified as goddess 'shakti' a female symbol. Shashi Deshpande's novels seek to posit the independent existence of women, resisting all attempts to preclude them from the centre stage of human existence. It is the awareness of such women, of individuality and strong attitudes, that motivate the female protagonists in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. The image of the self sacrificing woman has been replaced by "the woman as rebel and the woman as Power" (Shirwadkar 152). As observed by Nayantara Sahgal:

Through the rewriting women do, new Sitas and Savitris will arise, stripped of false sanctity and crowned with the human virtue of courage. Then at last we will know why they did what they did, and how their lone, remote struggles can help our search for identity and emancipation. (Talwar 33)

There seems to be a desire in women to emerge as a wider social factor. A development in this line could have far reaching consequences, signalled by many events that happen all around us.

After the declaration of the Rights of woman at Seneca Falls in America in 1848 rapid changes have been taking place in the status

of women all over the world. The enfranchisement of women, the opening up of more and more opportunities for women in various professions etc. The lighting of the Olympic torch by a woman priest helps the game to retain its sense of historic continuity while joining a feminine grace. Men have also come forward championing the cause of women. An instance of this is Dan Brown's novel The Da Vinci Code. While there are many other novels in a similar vein this work is specially referred to here because of the recent uproar created by it. There is also something of interest in this novel which invites comparison with Shashi Deshpande's novels. The Da Vinci Code speaks of Christ's desire for a church to be established by Mary Magdalene. Such a church, according to the novel, would have been more humane. There are many similarities between such a church and the ancient house of Shashi Deshpande.

The church of Mary Magdalene reminds us of the Shakti worship of India. This again has connection with the novels of our author. In India, the Tantra is aligned to the worship of the Shakti. The excavations in Mohenjadarro unveiled seven layers of cities, the bottom layer being estimated to be 4000 years older than the Christian era. These excavations have unveiled motifs connected with the linga,

Shakti, Swastika and nandi, are unmistakable evidences of the Shakti worship in the period. The ancient Indians held women in high esteem. Vedic sages addressed in their hymns the sun, moon, air, fire, dawn, water and knowledge as female. It is believed that where there is Siva there is Shakti. Shakti is the primeval energy and is associated with mother worship. Ancient Egyptians worshipped goddesses. The ancient Chinese concept of yong and ying appears to be a version of the Indian concept of Purusha and Prakriti. Modern psychologists fail to realize the importance of the womanly factor. While Freud and Jung are essentially masculine in their biases, Lacan is misunderstood by many as a feminist. What the woman wants is not to be like men. She wants to be herself. She is the creative 'nothingness' or the 'maya' or 'shunya' as symbolized by the symbolic representations of the inverted triangle or the Sri Chakra of the Hindu worship. The world of 'Being' comes out of the 'Nothingness' and vice versa, according to the interpretation of the Upanishads by Sri Buddha. Sartre's idea of 'nothingness' has great similarity to this. When Shakti becomes united with Siva, reality comes into being. The importance of the feminine element in the flow of life has to be given proper recognition, the absence of which leads to disruption of harmony in society. The

wish for the death of the male heir acts at the level of the semiotic as a disruptive force in the feminine psyche. The craving for the ancestral home, is a need for recognition of her status in the family tree. It is time that she is recognized and respected as the homemaker. From the feminists point of view, it is 'Akka' who rules the family, when men are marginal. It seems that the women in the novels of Shashi Deshpande want a greater recognition in the larger family setup. There seem to be an awareness in them that the image of the ideal self sacrificing wife and devoted mother was entirely is not completely true to themselves. The predicament of the female protagonists in these novels is remarkably similar to the dilemma of American women described in Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique. Conditioned by a mystique of women's fulfilment only through the roles of wives and mothers, they ignored the incipient feelings of unease within themselves:

The problem lay buried, unspoken for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning...she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question 'Is this all?'  
(Friedan 19 )

It is a feeling of emptiness that the women feel when they go through the deadening monotony of a routine which millions of women enslave themselves. Slavish conformity annihilates self obliterating the very existence of the woman. In trying to keep up with the societal demand, she is forced to project an image which is different from her real nature. Woman has been denied the opportunity to prove her worth in social and economic spheres, assigning her with all the petty elements of daily existence. She has been given the mundane daily chores of the house, giving man the freedom for 'higher work'. In real life and in the fictional world, she is presented as weak, vulnerable, self effacing and dependent. The ancient laws of Manusmriti, which has been laid down more than two thousand years ago, defines women's identity and status in terms of her relation to the men who frame her destiny-father, husband and son. A woman is prevented from governing herself as she likes. That "one is not born but rather becomes a woman... it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature" (Beauvoir 301) is the thesis of Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex, which makes a study of the ideology of woman, 'deconstructing' the social construction of gender and the cultural paradigms that support it. The basic idea that woman is first and

foremost a human being, not a sexual being is contained in Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the the Rights of Man, way back in 1790. It is the work of such dedicated feminists that has paved the way for the formulation of laws aiming at giving woman equal rights as man.

All these have to be kept in mind while arriving at a proper judgement of the issues raised by Shashi Deshpande. We shall now have a quick glance at one or two novelists treading the same field. The house, in Indrani Aikath's novel Daughters of the House, is pictured as the domain of women for the past fifty years, with no male claimant to it. The symbolic order of confinement has no place in the house, with the women in the house, Madhucchanda, her sister Mala and her aunt living in an oasis of unconscious semiotic bonding. In Victorian novels we find that the house ownership is a factor that gives them confidence to go on with their life. Dorothea, in Middlemarch becomes a mature and complete person when she inherits property. Dorothea rehabilitates herself in society because of the property which she inherits. The total maturity of her character is achieved when she chooses to give it up to become a more complete woman who acknowledges her own emotions and desires publicly

and at last begins to live her own life. Though technically The Married Woman's property Act came much later than the time of the story, the development of the plot does anticipate the law. Dorothea's stand would have been very different without the property which gave her independence of will.

The stories and the autobiography of Kamala Das introduces us to the matrilineal system which existed in Kerala. In many parts of the world, matrilineal system was the law. In India itself, this system is still prevalent in Assam and in other parts of Kerala, Manipur etc. Of course The Hindu Code Bill has tended to do away with these variations. In ancient Kerala, matrilineal system was the law among all communities. Not only the various castes among the Hindus, but also the non Hindus followed this. Slowly, one by one, all these castes switched on to the patriarchal system. Until 1975, matriarchal system was legally valid in the Nair communities of the central areas of Kerala. Shashi Deshpande brings our awareness to the fact that women are equally competent as men to shoulder the responsibility that comes with inheriting the ancestral property. A girl child, who is seen as a burden to be got married off into some other family, is groomed to look after the needs of her future husband and the members of her

husband's family. Her husband's home becomes her home, but again, that is also a place where she cannot carry on the family line. Hence it is noteworthy that in all the novels of Shashi Deshpande, it is the woman who upholds the traditional values of the ancient house.

The thesis cannot be completed at this stage without having a glimpse of what is happening around us connected with the promotion of the cause of women. The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act 2005 covers inequalities in property inheritance in the case of joint family property and parental dwelling house. This brings in some relief, enabling women to regain some lost ground. Its major achievement lies in including all daughters, especially married daughters as coparceners in joint family property. It has been popularly assumed that since women migrate on marriage, it is the men who should inherit the family property. But if men can retain their claims despite job related migration, women too can retain their claims on marriage related migration. By making all daughters coparceners in joint family property, women acquire significance both economically and symbolically. Economically it can enhance women's security by giving them birthrights in property that cannot be willed away by men. In a male biased society, where wills often disinherit women, this is a

substantial gain. Symbolically it shows that daughters and sons are equally important members of the parental family. The inheritance of paternal property not only enables a woman to get heirship to the family property but also maintaining the family line if required. It enhances her self worth thereby giving her greater bargaining power for herself and her children, in both parental and marital families. In this process certain value systems are demolished. It is precisely this demolition that the death of the male heir represents in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. This represents the realization of a repressed female desire in the racial unconscious for her rightful place in society.

Women's movements, working mothers, economic independence and a more open minded society which is accepting changes in sexual morality have irrevocably changed the marital equation. New laws are being implemented with a view to giving equality to men and women. In October 2006, the Protection from Domestic Violence Act became law. This is intended to make marriage a more equal partnership. This law prevents the man from abusing his wife-sexually, verbally, emotionally or economically. He cannot force sex on her, nor smear her character, insult her for not having a son or for not bringing dowry. It also ensures that the man cannot sell

the house in which she is staying. If the house is on rent, he will pick up the tab or provide accommodation. Moreover, he cannot give away his rights on property in which she is staying without court consent. The new laws are trying to equalise the respective rights and duties of wives and husbands, but at the same time women should be cautious of not misusing them, simply to get back at their husbands for other reasons. Women should be aware of their role in society with a view to a better future for not only the women, but for men as well.

The concept of a house based on a neutral version of the vastu siddhanta, as opposed to a patriarchal one, may bring about temporary troubles. Men would find it difficult to come to terms with such a concept since it minimizes their importance in the family set up. Sons who have been glorified from times immemorial need to adjust to a situation where the daughter has an equal importance in the family. They will also have to accept the worth of their wives too, who have a rightful place in their own ancestral home. A residence and partition rights in the parental dwelling is a blessing for women facing spousal violence. Men may initially feel apprehensive that this kind of empowerment of women would weaken the men. But this is not a battle of the sexes with one group emerging victorious while the other

becoming the loser. Instead, such a right would only help in making the relationship between men and women healthier and stronger, since it would be a relationship based on mutual understanding and respect rather than on fear and helplessness. Women need not be subjugated by suppressed feelings of insecurity and apprehension. After the initial teething troubles, with men feeling suspicious that power is being wrenched away from their hands, male ego being hurt etc., it would eventually lead to better prospects for both the male and female members of the society. The uprooting of the old system, to “ring out the old and ring in the new” becomes symbolic as the death of the male heir in the novels of Shashi Deshpande.

Shashi Deshpande’s insistence on the place of women in the natal home helps to reveal the implications of the associated meanings of the proverb “Charity begins at home.” Charity and justice are connected. A person who has no say in getting justice will be incapable of charity to anyone. If a person cannot get one’s due place in the house of one’s birth, one will have to beg for it outside. Any advancement of the status of women in society has to take this factor into consideration. As the characters in the novels under study show there is no use of women becoming a journalist or a doctor unless she

has her roots in the house of her parents. Sarita is a doctor. Manjeri and Indu are highly educated. Madhu is a journalist and Jaya is a writer. What they take to their husband's houses as dowry is of no significance here. They themselves are richly endowed. Moreover, a dowry is a poor substitute for rights in the house of one's birth which are mingled with duties. Indu and Sumi come back to their ancestral houses not to take away money but to discharge their duties to their larger families. Rights entail duties. Only when they are ready to take up both shall one be able to live one's life to the full. A woman should be able and ready to do so. Then only her dream of equality be realised. There is no use of gloating over a woman going to the outer space or another one taking up the reigns of the country. They could be exceptional things but we have to go to the root of the problem. There we find the ancient house and the vastu in which it is located.

The whole idea may be superstitious. Or it could be part of some occult science. In a highly educated state like Kerala, where more and more people are concerned about the vastu of their plots, it is not easy to ignore it. Correction of sensibilities have to start from there. No outward tinkering will be of much use. Shashi Deshpande reminds us of this when she puts before us this archetype of female

unconscious which cries for equality and the doing away of injustice.

Those who know the language of the unconscious will have no misapprehension regarding the “desire for the death of the male heir.”

The male heir here is representative of unjust denial of rights to women. The desire for “death” is only a desire for removal. Remove the injustice. This is the cry of those sensitive to female sensibilities.

Anyone with a basic knowledge of Freudian psychology will have no problem in understanding this.

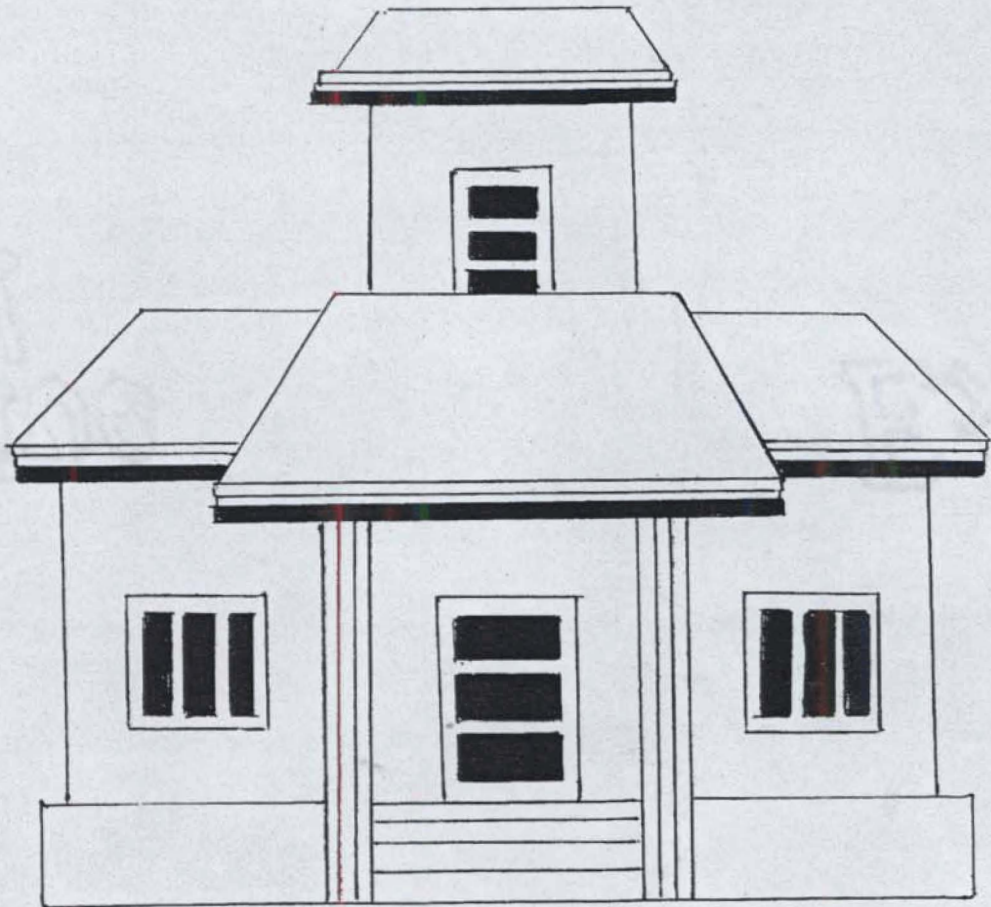


Fig. 1. The Big House - Front Elevation



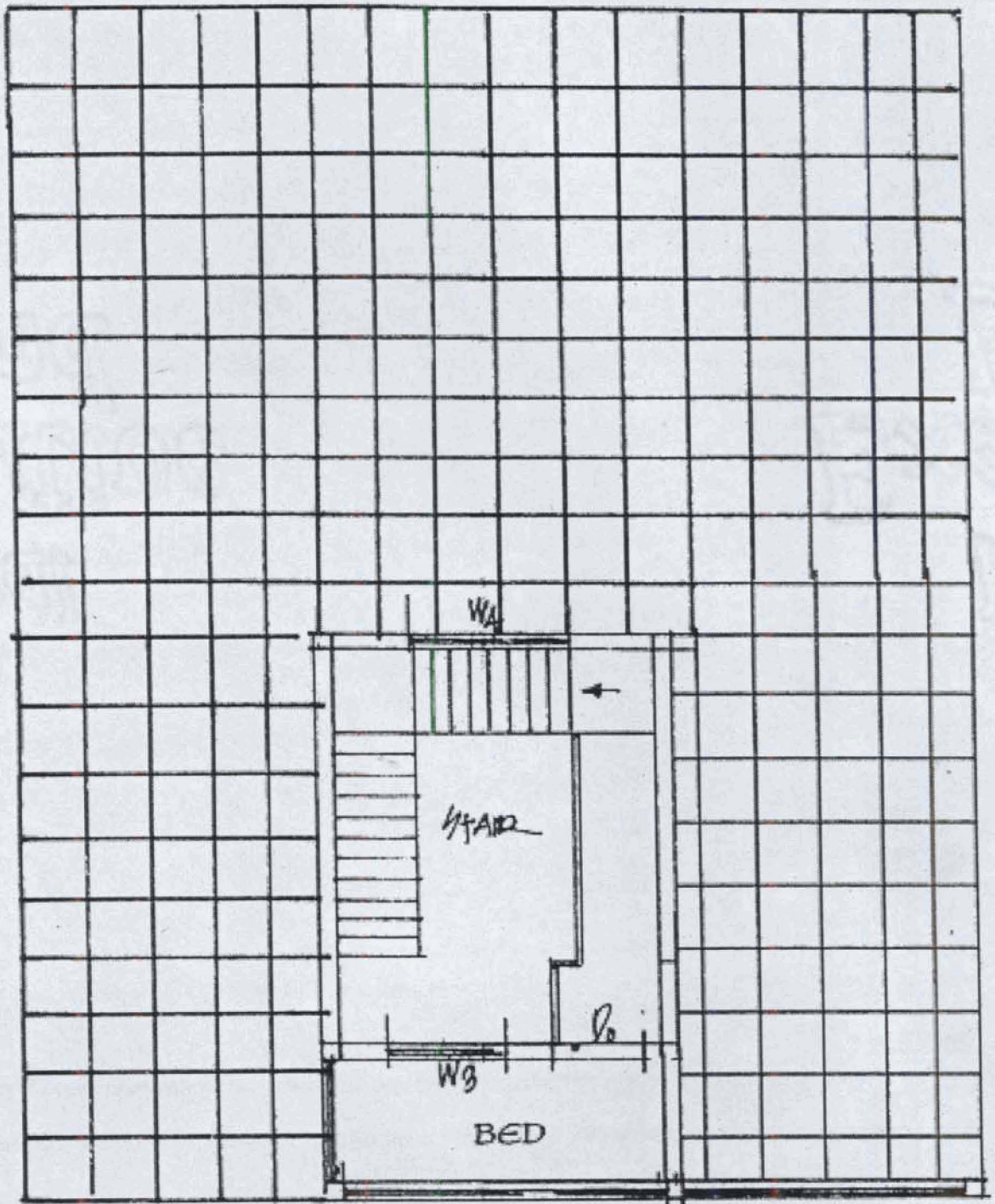


Fig. 3. Plan First Floor

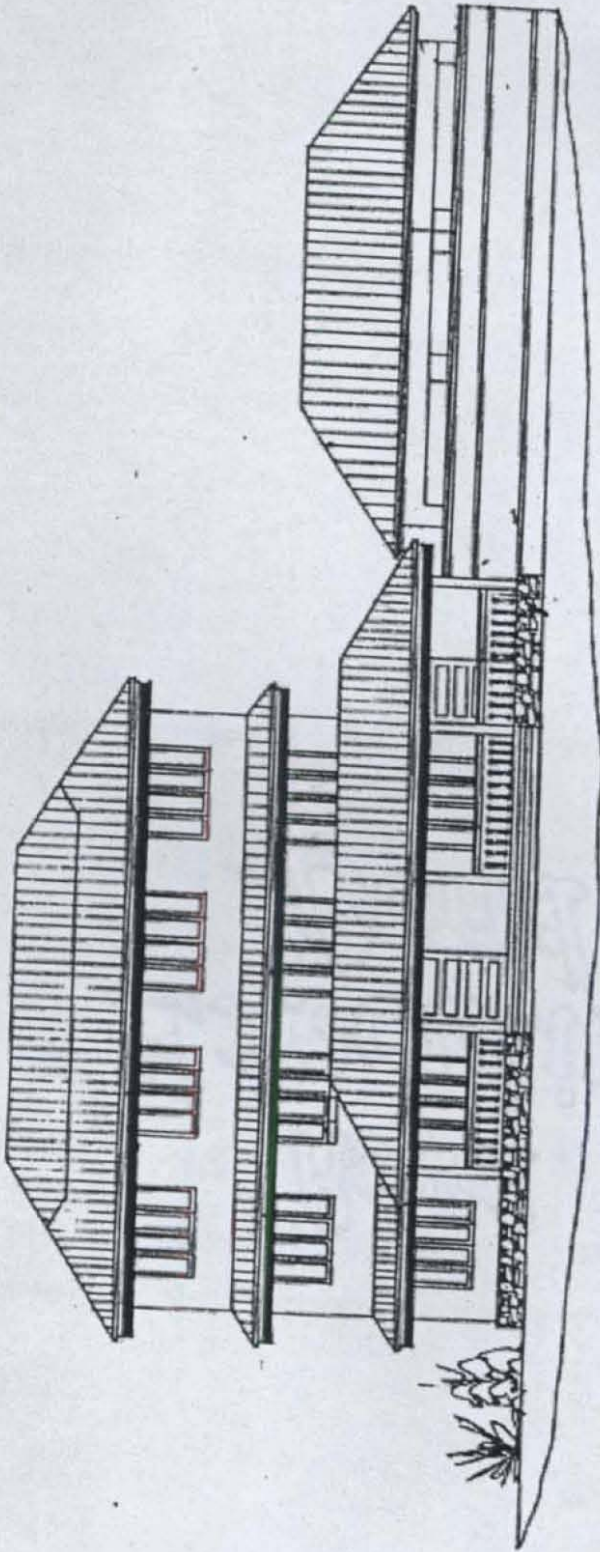


Fig. 4. The House in roots and shadows and Small Remedies

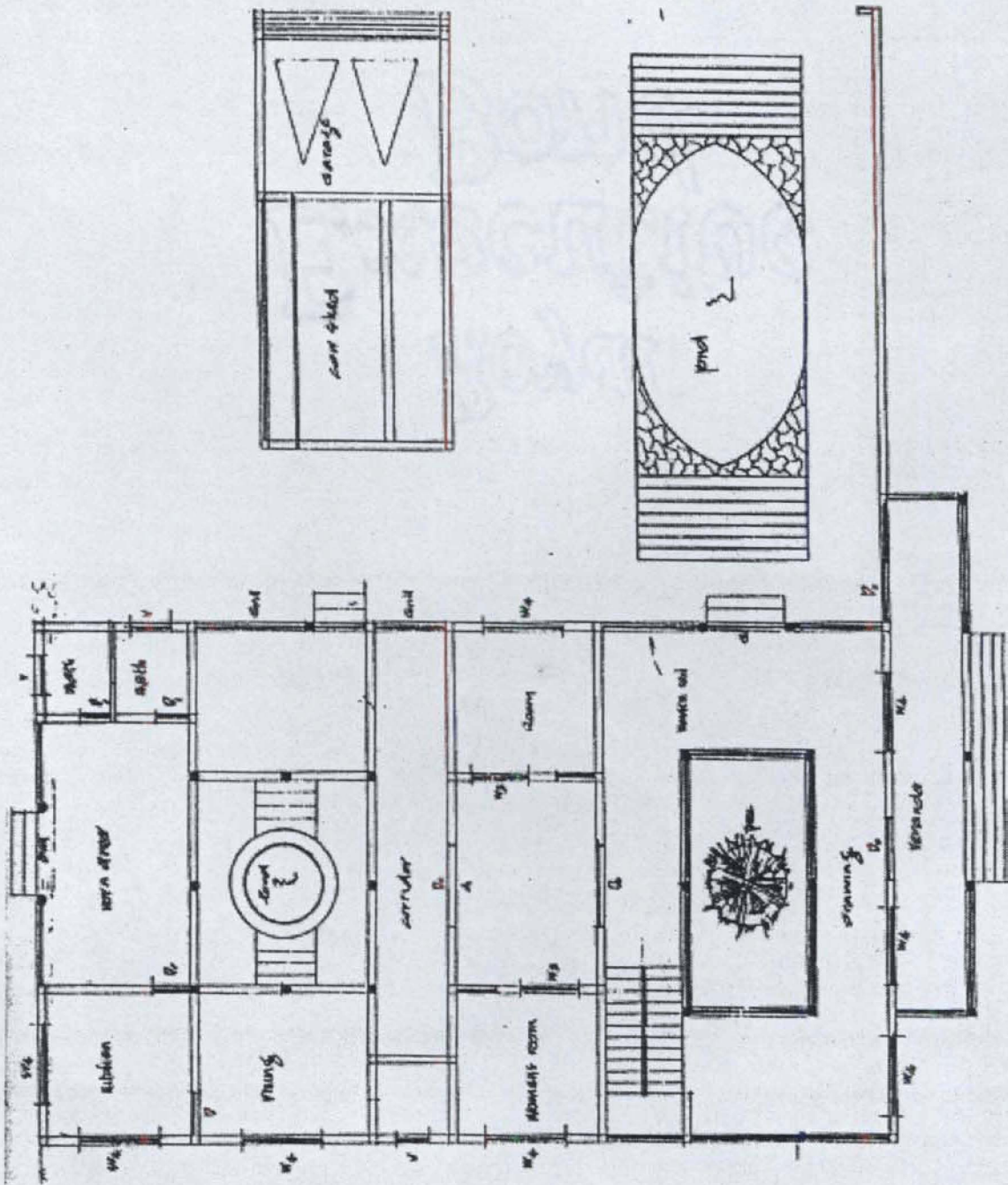


Fig. 5. Plan Ground Floor

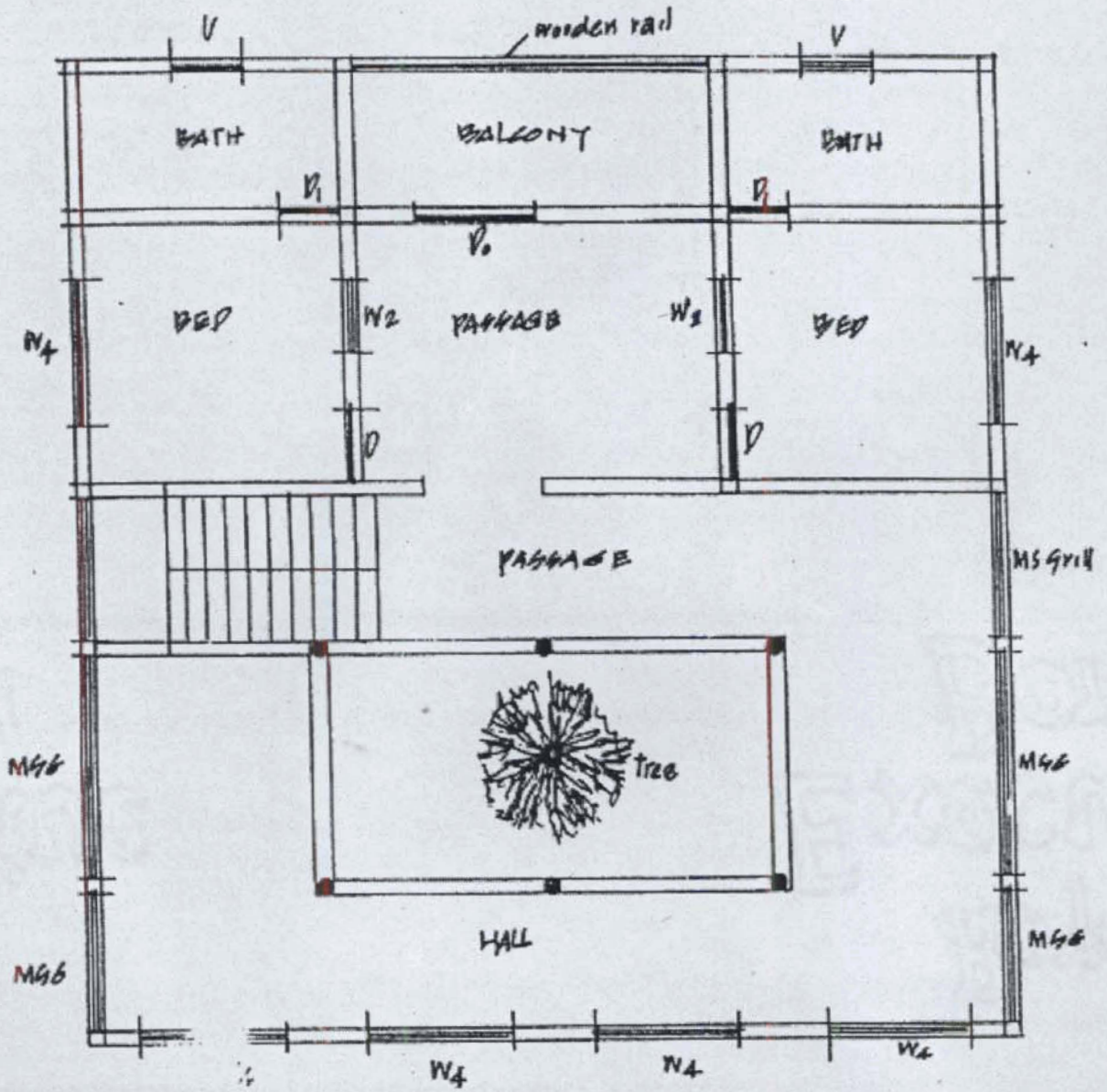


Fig. 6. Plan F.F. & S.F.

### Works Cited

- Adhikari, Madhumalati. "Creating a Brave New World: Shashi Deshpande's *A Matter of Time*." Contemporary Indian Women Writers in English. Ed. Surya Nath Pandey. New Delhi: Atlantic, 1999. 132-141.
- Agarwal, Bina. "Landmark Step to Gender Equality." Hindu 4 Sept 2005, Kerala ed.: 17.
- Atwood, Margaret. The Penelopiad. New Delhi: Penguin, 2005.
- Awasthi, A.K. "The Quest for Identity in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande." Quest for Identity in Indian English writing. Ed. R.S.Pathak. New Delhi: Bahri, 1992. 95-111.
- Balagopalan, Dr. Vaastuvidyadarsanam. Calicut: Vaastuvidyaprasthanam, 1994.
- Bandyopadhyay, Debalina. The Woman Question and Victorian novel: Ideology, Society Law and Literature. Kolkotta: Renaissance, 2002.
- Basu, Srimati. "*Haklenewali*: Indian Women's Negotiations of Discourses of Inheritance." Dowry and Inheritance. Ed. Srimati Basu. New Delhi: Kali, 2005. 151-170.
- Bawa, Seema "Identity Paradigms in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*."

Indian English Poetry And Fiction. Eds. N.R.Gopal and Suman

Sachar. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2000. 34-43.

Bende, Usha. "Mother, Daughter and Daughter's daughter: A Study of Shashi Deshpande." Mothers and Mother figures in Indo

English Literature. Jalandar: ABS, 1994. 134-142.

Berger, Louis. From Instinct to Identity. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1974.

Bhatnagar, Parvati. "Search of Identity: A Study of Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds no Terrors*." The Quest 15.1 (2001): 50-57.

Bhatt, Indira. "Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* : A Study in Guilt Consciousness." Indian Women Novelists. Set III. Vol. IV. Ed. R.K.Dhawan. New Delhi: Prestige, 1995. 41-50.

Bhavani, J. "Nirdvandva: Individuation and Integration as the Heroines Quest in Shashi Deshpande's Fiction." Indian Women Novelists. Set III: Vol. 4. Ed. R.K.Dhawan. New Delhi: Prestige, 1995. 20-31.

Bronte, Emily. Wuthering Heights. New York: Signet, 1987.

- Brown, Dan. The Da Vinci Code. Great Britain: Bantam, 2003.
- Chandra, Suresh. "Semiotics of Feministic Discourse in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*." Symbolism in Indian Fiction in English. Ed. Ramesh K. Srivastava. Jalandar: ABS, 1997. 203-210.
- Charvet, John. Feminism. London: J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd, 1982.
- Chatterjee, Shoma A. The Indian Woman in Perspective. New Delhi: Ajanta, 1993.
- Chodorow, Nancy. The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender. Berkley: California UP, 1978.
- Datta, Damayanti. "End of the Old Order." India Today 4 Dec. 2006: 61-68.
- De Beauvoir, Simone. The Second Sex. Trans. H.M. Parshley. New York: Vintage, 1952.
- Deshpande, Shashi. "The Power Within." Creating Theory: Writers on Writing. Ed. Jasbir Jain. New Delhi: Pencraft, 2000. 205-212.
- . A Matter of Time. New Delhi: Penguin, 1996.
- . Moving On. New Delhi: Penguin, 2004.
- . Roots and Shadows. New Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1983

- . Small Remedies. New Delhi: Penguin, 2000.
- . That Long Silence. London: Virago, 1988.
- . The Binding Vine. London: Virago, 1993.
- . The Dark Holds no Terrors. New Delhi: Vikas, 1980.
- . Come Up and Be Dead. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 2003.
- . 'On the Writing of a Novel'. Indian Women Novelists. Set I Vol. V. Ed. R.K. Dhawan. New Delhi: Prestige, 1991.
- Deshpande, Shashi. Personal Interview. 16 May 2001.
- Deshpande, Shashi. Personal Interview. 22 June 2003.
- Eagleton, Terry. Literary Theory: An Introduction. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.
- Easwaran, Eknath. The Dhammapada. New Delhi: Penguin, 1967.
- Edinger. Ego and Archetype. New York: Putnam, 1972.
- Freud, Sigmund. Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis. Trans. James Strachey. New York: Penguin, 1973.
- Friedan, Betty. The Feminine Mystique. New York: Penguin, 1986.
- Gaur, Rashmi. "Suffering and Desire in Shashi Deshpande's *Small Remedies*" The Quest 16.1 (2002): 33-37.
- Gupta Santhosh. "The Binding Vine of Relationships in Shashi

Deshpande's Novels." Recent Indian Literature in English: A Cultural Perspective. Ed. Mithilish K. Pandey. New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1999. 89-102.

Guttal, Vijaya. "Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* and *A Matter of Time*: A Reading in the Postcolonial Context." Writing Difference: The Novels of Shashi Deshpande. Ed. Chanchala K. Naik. New Delhi: Pencraft, 2005.

Gyaltsen, Indrani Aikath. Daughters of the House. New Delhi: Penguin, 1991.

Hardy, Thomas. The Return of the Native. New York: Signet, 1987.

Holm, Chandra. "Potent Remedies: Themes and Techniques in Shashi Deshpande's *Small Remedies*." The Atlantic Literary Review 1.2 (2000): 154-161.

Holmstrom, Lakshmi. "Of Times Past. Rev. of *Small Remedies*." Indian Review of Books 9.8 (2000): 4-5.

Humm, Maggie. Feminist Criticism: Women as Contemporary Critics. Great Britain: Harvester, 1986.

Irigaray, Luce. An Ethics of Sexual Difference. Trans. Carolyn Burke. London: Athlone UP, 1984.

- Jain, Jasbir. Gendered Realities, Human Spaces: The Writing of Shashi Deshpande. Jaipur: Rawat, 2003.
- Jung, C.G. Aspects of the Feminine. Trans. R.F.C.Hull. London: Routledge, 1982.
- Jung, C.G. On The Nature of the Psyche. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973.
- Jung, C.G. The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious. New York: Princeton, 1969.
- King, Adele. "Shashi Deshpande: Portraits of an Indian Woman." The New Indian Novel in English. Ed. Vinay Kirpal. New Delhi: Allied, 1990. 92-108.
- Kirpal, Viney. The Postmodern Indian English Novel: Interrogating the 1980s and 1990s. Bombay: Allied, 1996.
- Kishwar, Madhu. "Rethinking Dowry Boycott." Dowry and Inheritance. Ed. Srimati Basu. New Delhi: Kali, 2005. 268-278.
- Kristeva, Julia. "Revolution in Poetic Language." The Kristeva Reader. Ed. Toril Moi. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986. 89-115.
- Lacan, Jacques. "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious." The

Communication Theory Reader. Ed. Paul Cobley. London: Routledge, 1996. 186-193.

Lacan, Jacques. Ecrits: A Selection. Trans. A. Sheridan. London: Tavistock, 1977.

Laing, R.D. Self and Others. London: Tavistock Publications, 1961.

Lannoy, Richard. The Speaking Tree: A study of Indian Culture and Society. New Delhi: OUP, 1971.

Laurence, Margaret. The Stone Angel. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1998.

Milhotra, Ruby. "Shashi Deshpande's *Small Remedies*: A Woman's Quest for Refuge: A Reappraisal." New Lights on Indian Women Novelists in English. Part 2. Ed. Dr. Amarnath Prasad. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2004. 79-99.

Millet, Kate. Sexual Politics. New York: Doubleday, 1970.

Morrison, Toni. Sula. New York: NAL, 1973.

Nabar, Vrinda. Caste as woman. New Delhi: Penguin, 1995.

Nambudiripad, Kanipayyur Krishnan. Personal Interview. 12 June 2002.

Nambudiripad, Kanipayyur Krishnan. Personal Interview. 21 March 2003.

Nityanandan, Indira and Reena Kothari. Indo-English Fiction: The

Last Decade. New Delhi: Creative, 2002.

Pal, Adesh. "Ego-self Crisis in the Fiction of Shashi Deshpande."

Changing Faces of women in Indian Writing in English. Ed.

M.Q.Khan and A.G. Khan. New Delhi: Creative, 1995. 71-79.

Pal, Adesh. "*That Long Silence: A Study in Displaced Anger.*" The

Fiction of Shashi Deshpande. Ed. R.S. Pathak. New Delhi:

Creative Books, 1998. 119-125.

Palekar, Shalmalee. "Gender, Feminism and Postcoloniality: A

Reading of Shashi Deshpande's Novels." Writing Difference:

The Novels of Shashi Deshpande. Ed. Chanchala K. Naik. New

Delhi: Pencraft, 2005. 46-69.

Pallavi and Rashmi Gaur. "The Roots of Girlhood Casting Shadows

on Womanhood: Shashi Deshpande's *Roots and Shadows.*"

Reflections on Indian English Literature. Eds. M.R. Verma

and K.A. Agarwal. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2002.

41-52.

Parikh, Indira J. Indian Women: An Inner Dialogue. New Delhi: Sage,

1989.

Pathak, R.S. "A *Matter of Time: Of Human Bonds and Bondages.*"

The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande. Ed. R. S. Pathak. New Delhi:  
Creative Books, 1998. 155-168.

Paul, Premila. "*The Dark Holds No Terrors – A Woman's Search for  
Refuge.*" Indian Women Novelists. Set I. Vol V. Ed. R.K.  
Dhawan. New Delhi: Prestige, 1991. 60-81.

Piciucco, Pier Paolo. "Houses and Homecoming in the Fiction of  
Shashi Deshpande." The Journal of Indian Writing in English  
29.2 (2001): 34-43.

Prakash, Nirmala. "From Margin to the Centre: Shashi Deshpande  
and Arundhati Roy." Indian English Literature. Vol.3.  
Ed. Basavaraj Naikar. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2002.  
200-209.

Prakash, Ravendra. "Becoming Whole: A Reading of Shashi  
Deshpande's *The Dark Holds no Terrors.*" Quest for Identity  
in Indian English Writing Part I: Fiction. Ed. R.S. Pathak. New  
Delhi: Bahri Publications, 1992. 187-191.

Pratt, Annis. Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction. Bloomington:  
Indiana U P, 1981.

- Rajan, Rajeswari Sunder. "The Feminist Plot and the Nationalist Allegory: Home and World in Two Indian Women's Novels in English." Modern Fiction Studies 39.4 (1993): 71-92.
- Ramamoorthy, P. "My Life is My Own: A Study of Shashi Deshpande's Women." Indian Women Novelists. Set 1. Vol. 5. Ed. R.K.Dhawan. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1991. 37-49.
- Ranchan, Som P. Anatomy of the Indian Psyche. New Delhi: Ajantha, 1987.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." Signs 5.4. (1980): 631-60.
- Roy, Anuradha. Patterns of Feminist Consciousness in Indian Women Writers. New Delhi: Prestige, 1999.
- Roy, Arundati. The God of Small Things. New Delhi: India Ink, 1997.
- Ruthven, K.K. Feminist Literary Studies: an introduction. New York: Cambridge UP, 1984.
- Sahi, Rashmi. "Mother-Daughter Relationship in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande." Indian English Literature. Vol II. Ed. Basavaraj Naikar. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2002. 130-135.
- Sandhu, Sarabjit. "Introduction". The Image of Women in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. Ed. Sandhu Sarabjit. New Delhi: Prestige, 1991. 7-18.

- Sandhu, Sarabjit. "The image of Woman in That Long Silence." Indian Women Novelists. Set I. Vol V. Ed. R.K.Dhawan. New Delhi: Prestige, 1991. 138-146.
- Sasmal, Rabi Narayan. " Trends in Indian English Novel in the Nineteen Nineties: Tradition and Individual Talent." The Critical Endeavour 9 (2003): 116-122.
- Sathupathi, Prasanna Sree. " An Interview with Shashi Deshpande." New Lights on Indian Women Novelists in English. Ed. Amarnath Prasad. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2003. 89-101.
- Selden, Raman. A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory. New York: Harvester,1989.
- Seshadri, Vijayalakshmi. The New Indian Woman in Indian English Women Writers since the 1970s. New Delhi: B.R. Publishing, 1995.
- Sharma, Bela Rani. Marriage, Family, Violence and Divorce. Jaipur: Mangal Deep, 1997.
- Shaw, Bernard. Candida. Plays by George Bernard Shaw. London: Signet,1960.
- Shirwadkar, Meena. Image of Woman in the Indo Anglian Novel. New Delhi: Sterling, 1979.

- Showalter, Elaine. A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing. NJ: Princeton, 1977.
- Swain S.P. "Roots and Shadows: A Feminist Study." Feminist English Literature. Ed. Manmohan K. Bhatnagar. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2002. 48-63.
- Talwar, Sree Rashmi. Woman's Space: The Mosaic World of Margaret Drabble and Nayantara Sahgal. New Delhi: Creative Books, 1997.
- Trasi, Nitin. The Science of Enlightenment: A Scientific Explanation. New Delhi: D.K.Printworld, 1999.
- Tripathi, J.P. "The Feminist Upsurge in Jaya's Ego in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*." Contemporary Indian Women Writers in English: A Feminist Perspective. Ed. Surya Nath Pandey. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1999. 88-96.
- Weedon, Chris. Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987.



NB - 5564