

Chapter 4

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Both the discussed novels here deal with modern literary theme: the spiritual isolation and loneliness of man. In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* Carson McCullers deals with spiritual isolation of five people existing in a dull Southern town. Singer, Mick, Biff, Jake Blount, Dr. Copeland all are disillusioned and each of these characters is a kind of universe but incomplete so that he/she needs a prop to express himself. These characters are basically disintegrated Southerners. Each and every character in this novel is involved in a quest for meaning in life in one way or another. The story invariably attempts to generalize the illusory nature of human love. The spiritual stagnancy and frustration of 1930s is well communicated to the readers. Self's loneliness in time is exhausted through her novel. Novelists of 1930s like Carson McCullers presented the South as a representation of the crossing of the ways. The Southern society was trying to attempt to become a modern nation-state and at the same time tried to hold the roots of patriarchal community. This picture of Southern society of 1930s created the southern novel depicting a drama of self and history. This novel offers McCullers' theme of an estrangement of the self. She sees the problem of self-identity without any solution. It is a discourse of modern man with his heart's loneliness. The pessimism reaches to its highest point here. The prime need of man and a possible remedy for man's loneliness and obsessive self-concern is love. Carson McCullers underlined the problems of the period- the difficulty of love, the frustration of the individual seeking to affirm his identity. Not only Negro race but people in general experienced a great economic shift from the culture of cotton and the exploitation of

workers. The development of the oil industry, textile and chemical industry gave rise to new social arrangement. This turned into new nationalism. Coloured races were successful in their demands for independence. This period of change was more important for Southerners. The characters in this novel presenting that era are typically damned, voiceless and rejected persons personifying their loneliness and fighting loneliness with violence and depravity. Some characters are seen fighting their isolation with sex or drink and some like Mick in search of accord.

Mrs. McCullers concentrates her novels on love and search of human heart for fulfillment. Social scene reinforces her theme. The social set up reflects the dry, lonesome hearts of characters.

“The town was in the middle of the deep South. The summers were long and the months of winter cold were very few.... The town was a fairly large one. On the main street there were several blocks of two and three-story shops and business offices. But the largest buildings in the town were factories, which employed a large percentage of the population. These cotton mills were big and flourishing and most of the workers in the town were very poor. Often in the faces along the streets there was the desperate look of hunger and of loneliness.” (McCullers, 1940: 3-4)

The city symbolizes modern industrialization and deprivation. The setting is used symbolically to show the loneliness of Southerners. Even other things like the flying-jinny, merry-go-round symbolize meaningless and oppressive round of mechanical activities associated with alienation.

Setting in *That Long Silence* is quite different from that of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. McCullers presents the dejected Southerners in small Georgia town whereas Shashi Deshpande portrays middle class Brahmin

Culture. This socially upper class is portrayed as fighting their alienation that is result of new awakening in India regarding the caste system. Previously caste system oppressed many who belong to the lower castes and rejected at all the right of living in society. With the new awakening came new social order into existence. Often demand of one's justice does injustice to the other. In the Brahmin society of 80s we find a shift in the mindsets of Brahmins. They started to feel dejected in the new social alignment. They are devoid of their conventional roles and a fixed source of income. They depended on the benevolence of the other members of Brahmin society for education; similarly they had to shift to cities to meet their daily needs. And the struggle of identity as well as survival (though not prominent as it was for lower classes) held them apart from the society. Modern Brahmins having abandoned their traditional way of life and being cut off from their traditions, suffer from an unjustified guilt complex and have swallowed this suppression. They are carrying the burden of the past guilt for which they are not responsible. This generalization of guilt post-independence secluded this section of the society. The stifling attitude about the roles in society is a major cause of alienation in this community. Not only Brahmins but people in metropolitan cities in general are discussed here, alienation has become a major characteristic of people living in metros. Both the novelists write about the region and regional culture they know the best. Deshpande's characters belong to metropolitan cities where detachment from each other is maintained deliberately in order to keep intact their 'space'. Deshpande does not attack on value system; this task is left to us as readers. What is more important is that Shashi Deshpande tries to portray how the individual suffers, falls and stands again. Shashi Deshpande chooses her characters from the educated, middle-class of modern urban areas. Her novel

investigates inner workings of the human psyche. Her characters and setting comment on the changing social norms and show the meaning of life. The changing Brahmin culture where touch is to be avoided has accepted changing atmosphere with its good as well as bad. And one of its adverse effects on its culture is that changing family structure. In previous years, joint family was an important aspect of Indian society and it provided a kind of shelter to a person and acted as an important instrument in the process of socialization. It is argued that joint family structure protected human beings from alienation. But in *That Long Silence*, we come across some women characters like Kusum who are also victims of insanity and subsequent alienation. They are also victims at the hands of joint family and patriarchal structure. Deshpande creates a family atmosphere to show her characters' conflicts, anger and frustrations. They all seem to be too unhappy at some point of time to cope up with life and understand the deeper meaning of existence. They learn from experiences and one of the striking qualities that make *That Long Silence* different *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* is that almost all characters in *That Long Silence* try to reconcile instead of giving up like the characters in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. This reconciliation gives optimism to her novels. Her characters do not break away from family; they maintain family ties and feel secure.

The structure of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* is tripartite. Part one introduces style, characters, setting, plot and theme. Part two contains the major plot development. And part three demonstrates the reactions of the characters to the death of Singer and inability of other characters to solve their personal and social problems. There are various symbols interwoven to suggest and amplify the prevalent isolated hearts in both the novels. The first and foremost symbol of alienation is 'Silence'. In *The Heart is a Lonely*

Hunter, making a deaf-mute character a protagonist of the novel is a deliberate attempt that constitutes a symbol of isolation. Being mute, Singer becomes the centre of attraction to all the other characters and is highly esteemed for his ability to listen to others' woes. But at the same time he can't make himself fully known to them. Other characters try to 'deify' him but he simply lacks the godlike qualities. This is the quality with which Singer is able to get along so well with other characters. Every character fashions his image as per his own desires. But there is irony in his name 'Singer'. Singer is a symbol of imperfection and he loves a person who is incapable of receiving his love. Singer's silence also plays an instrument in actually intensifying others' illusions about him. They find temporary solace in his silence and take it as an acceptance to their views. All their illusions are shattered when Singer commits suicide. Physical deformity is not a person's choice but a fate. Singer's fate involuntarily affects others' fate.

The inability of Singer to express his feelings symbolizes lack of understanding and communication among the characters. On the contrary, characters that are able to speak – Blount and Copeland more specifically can not put their ideas in proper words. All fails to articulate their ideas and emotions having one-sided vision of life. They do not understand that Singer also needs assurance and love.

“They only “sing” of their needs and thoughts to Singer, who, in spite of his name, cannot really “sing” or express himself adequately.”

(McDowell, 1980: 34)

There is communication between Singer and his disciples but it can be termed as meaningless communication because Singer cannot understand fully what other characters try to convey him nor do they try to understand Singer's feelings. As Margaret McDowell Puts it:

“ Singer inadvertently furthers their narcissism by providing with his eyes the mirror wherein they seem to see reflected what they themselves wish to see, irrespective of whether he actually understands them.”

(McDowell, 1980: 34)

The ‘silence’ in *That Long Silence* is enforced one. Through Jaya’s silence Shashi Deshpande shows the absurdity of existence. As Anupam Nagar puts it:

“The advancement from maintaining absolute silence (‘Mounam’) to the breaking of the silence speaks of a transition that Jaya has accomplished. The connotations of *Silence* in the novel could possibly be categorized under the following heads: (i) Suppression and Security (Jaya: Mohan), (ii) Loss of Identity (Suhasini: Mohan: Jaya), (iii) Death and Realisation (Jaya: Kamat), (iv) Social Milieu (Jaya).” (Nagar, 2001: 38)

Jaya maintains silence in her married life for over seventeen years, and in a way silence becomes her friend. She can contemplate and retrospect her life in silence. Mohan fails to understand her silence and she finds a good companion in Kamat who tries to erase this sense of humiliation. Jaya tries to come out of her shell and that only in silence. She does not revolt violently because she recognizes that everything can be made possible. She does not surrender herself to the responsibilities of marriage but she tries to create her own identity within the framework of marriage institution. Therefore silence is a symbol both for concealment and revelation.

Silence is a destructive device. It implies shame, guilt, suffering and death in both the aforesaid novels. Those who try to break the silence can survive. Therefore Jaya and Singer stand in contrast to each other. Self-expression, being the basic human right is an instrument in healing the

alienation. Singer is denied of this right and cannot break silence or can't use silence for revelation of his inner feelings like Jaya. He can not understand that like other characters have deified him, he has also attached some god-like qualities to Antonapoulos. Jaya uses silence to contemplate, to understand her inner self. Unable to do so, Singer commits suicide and silence here proves to be an instrument of death.

Music is used as an instrument to reveal the innermost feelings of characters. There are different references in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* to music. "Willie's harmonica tunes, the music from Biff's mandolin, the mechanical music of the flying-jinny and the "singing moan" of Doctor Copeland's voice accompany the classical music that Mick enjoys in the dark and composes in her "inner room" (Fuller, 1987-88: 56)

Mick in her "inner room" dreams of beautiful music. Her pursuit of music symbolizes both her energy and her love of beauty. She listens to concerts on the radios of families and later on the radio Singer buys for his friends' pleasure. The music helps her to keep mundane routine life at a safe distance. Consequently, it helps her to keep herself away from frustration. Her faith that she may be able someday to study music organizes her thinking. Her attraction to Mozart's music symbolizes her efforts to achieve harmony and get rid of her feeling of loneliness. Mozart and singer are equated in her mind. It suggests that the way sad, soft music of Mozart provides catharsis to her alienation, is same to that of the way Singer provides catharsis to all her sad feelings.

In the same way Jaya finds solace in the songs of Lata and Rafi. She secretly enjoyed the songs of Rafi and Lata instead of developing taste for classical music of Paluskar and Faiyaz Khan. Her father insisted on developing taste for classical music but Jaya turned to songs from Hindi

films because she felt closer to them. Those songs provided a kind of emotional comfort to her rebellious nature in a traditional family.

In *That Long Silence*, a married couple is compared to ‘a pair of bullocks’:

“Two bullocks yoked together.... It is more comfortable for them to move in the same direction. To go in different directions would be painful; and what animal would voluntarily choose pain?”

(Deshpande, 1988: 7, 11-12)

Generally, a woman don't have a separate identity unless she is defined in terms of her relationship with men, i.e. as a daughter, wife, mothers etc. the sacrifices begin in woman's life with marriage and she is tied to her husband like ‘two bullocks yoked together’. As Y.S. Sharadha puts it:

“Though marriage is important both for men and women, woman is not enjoying the same freedom as her male counterpart. Even if the woman chooses her own husband, she is labeled a rebel not only by the family but also the society consisting of both men and women. So, the society as a whole is to be blamed for usurping the freedom of woman regarding marriage.” (Sharadha, 2002: 110)

Of the various symbols and images for loneliness in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, the most prevalent is freaks and physical deformity. Almost every character has either a whim or freakishness about something or has physical deformity of a kind. Mick is overgrown and a tomboy and Biff has a fondness for freaks. He has an ambiguous nature, imbibing both masculine and feminine qualities. Jake Blount's head is very large and well shaped, as observed by Biff, but he has a soft and slender neck as a boy's. his mustache looked false, as it had been stuck on. Singer and Antonopoulos

are deaf-mutes and later Antonapoulos is admitted to an asylum for his insanity. Mick is a tomboy and is passionate about music. Willie's legs were cut off in a racial attack and Dr. Copeland can go to an extent to prove his point. In *That Long Silence* also Kusum's insanity makes her aloof from others. Thus freakishness and deformity are obvious symbols of alienation. These characters are unable to be a part of any bunch of the society and are left alone. Even the image of train symbolizes monotony of life in metropolitan cities.

This may be said to be one of the major causes of alienation. Failed sexual relationship leads to disintegration of married life. Biff and Alice represent, in this sense a death in life. Their marriage is without any affection. Even though she is his wife, he doesn't care for her presence. He is cold in his reflections. Biff always feel different from his real self when Alice is around. They have lived together for ten years, but she remains a non-entity for him. He is strongly influenced by his own sexual experiences. At the age of forty-four he becomes prematurely impotent and that becomes the main cause of his aloofness from Alice. Since his marriage to Alice, he feels that their marriage was a mistake, and they endured it because of economic necessity and habit. There was no distinctive point about her that he can concentrate his attention. When Alice dies, Biff feels not the slightest pity or regret for her. After her death, some feminine qualities become more prominent in Biff. His ambiguous nature leads to both of them dissatisfaction in marital life.

Mick's first sexual experience is more important in the development of psyche in latter part. She is at the age when she looked like an overgrown boy. The sexual encounter between Mick and Harry after their naked swim in the country breaks down her "inside room". Her initiation into adult

sexuality with Harry Minowitz fills their minds with a sense of guilt. She withdraws into herself. Both are horrified with the thought of committing a sin. The results of this event were more serious for Harry than Mick. Stunned by a sense of evil Harry offers to marry Mick. However, they both decide that they will never experience this again or want to marry with each other. Harry leaves the town to find a job and Mick forced by economic circumstances takes up a job at dime store. She loses her insights into the human condition and surrenders herself to the mundane existence of life. The loss of virginity symbolizes loss of vitality or insight. The sense of guilt haunts her so violently that she hurts herself. She feels like telling this secret to someone but she is not close enough to her sisters and mother to tell the truth and unburden herself. She has special friends to confide in them. She wants to tell Mr. Singer and still she is thinking of that possibility when Singer commits suicide. Unhappy sexual experience weighs on her mind like a burden. And the thought that she has to live all her life with this burden now puts her apart in her isolated world.

Similarly the sexual and marital life of Jaya and Mohan is not different from that of Biff and Alice. Jaya's marriage in *That Long Silence* is an arranged one. As per the custom of their time, there is no communication between Jaya and Mohan. In spite of all worldly comforts, their marital life has become meaningless similar to that of Biff and Alice. Jaya has altered herself to the needs of her husband, Mohan. Shashi Deshpande uses an apt image of a worm crawling into a hole. Jaya resembles that worm which is nothing but a creature struggling hard to live. Jaya's existence becomes meaningless. Jaya in an irony and as a matter of fact analyses their relationship as wife and husband:

“First there’s love, then there’s sex-that was how I had always imagined it to be. But after with Mohan I had realized that it could so easily be the other way round.

Love...? Yes, what else could I call it but love when I thought of how I had longed for his physical presence, when I remembered how readily, almost greedily, I had responded to his touch?..... It seems to me now that we had, both of us, rehearsed the roles of husband and wife so well that when the time come we could play them flawlessly, word perfect.” (Deshpande, 1988: 95)

It is clear that the marital roles of husband and wife have become merely rehearsing the roles for the future. She also realizes that the act of sex has also become a duty for Mohan and they can perform their roles without love and affection. This dissolution of sensibilities destroys the bliss of marital life. The relation of Jaya and Mohan has become an epitome of failure, disgust and disappointment. As Bijay Kumar Das puts it:

“This disgust of living with a man who does not love the woman the way she expected him to be, is a burning problem that educated women have to face in contemporary society..... Through Jaya’s character Shashi Deshpande has thus expressed the ambivalent attitude of contemporary educated independent-minded Indian women who can neither reconcile themselves to a new situation when their husbands ignore them and crush their ambition in life nor cast off their husbands simply because the husband is like sheltering tree they cannot afford to live without.” (Das, 1999: 88)

Two prominent women characters, Mick and Jaya, search for love and meaning of life. A humiliating sexual experience plays a vital role for both of them. In *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, Mick is introduced as a tomboy standing confidently on the roof of a house under construction. Jaya

at first appears as confident, convent educated woman trying to be a successful writer. But at the end of the novels, both are frustrated and no longer challenge the world. They both try to make life possible and one of the striking qualities is that they both try to create their own identity, at least hope to make an attempt to make life easy in spite of many obstacles instead to give up like Singer.

Mick is frustrated in her attempts to study music, and disturbed by her consciousness of female sexuality. She aspires to be a musician in a world in which she finds herself alone. Her love of music serves to partially fill her emptiness. Many critics argue that the main cause of her failure is her sexual trauma. She writes graffiti on the walls of a house under construction which includes names of notable men- Mozart, Edison, Dick Tracy and Mussolini and she also write “*a very bad word- PUSSY*” on the opposite wall and her initials, M.K.” (McCullers, 1940: 37) In her fantasies, she imagines a brilliant future for herself:

“Later on- when she was twenty- she would be a great world famous composer. She would have a whole symphony orchestra and conduct all of her music herself. She would stand up on the platform in front of the big crowds of people. To conduct the orchestra she would wear either a real man’s evening suit or else a red dress spangled with rhinestones” (McCullers, 1940: 205)

Because there was no tradition of female composers upon whom she could model her dreams she sees herself in man’s dress. Her images oscillate from masculine to feminine. But her heroism is entirely masculine. She deliberately ignores her femaleness and dresses like boys. She tells her sisters she would be boy any day. As Constance M. Perry puts it:

“Ironically, Mick’s graffiti- “PUSSY M.K.” – prophesies her ignominious fate in a culture where femaleness disqualifies genius.”

(Perry, 1986:40)

Her dreams also reveal her fear of her future; it is described to her brother, Bubber:

“It’s like I’m swimming. But in stead of water I’m pushing out my arms and swimming through great big crowds of people. The crowd is a hundred times bigger than in Kresses store on Saturday afternoon. The biggest crowd in the world. And sometimes I’m yelling and swimming through people, knocking them all down wherever I go- and other times I’m on the ground and people are trampling all over me and my insides are oozing out on the sidewalk.”

(McCullers, 1940: 39)

Thus violence in the novel is used to show the frustration of character. She hates her for being female and when she fails to build a ukulele she keeps hitting her thighs with her fists. After the failure of prom party also she becomes violent as a response to frustration. Portia, another female character also gets frustrated and uses violence to give outlet to her feelings when she comes across injustices wrecked upon her family, she gets drunk and beats her head upon the table. Blount also gets drunk in frustration and beats his fists and head against a brick wall. Lancy mutilates himself after his sister is raped by a white person. He castrates himself in hatred to masculinity.

Mick’s hitting her thighs with rock indicates her hatred for her sexuality. Her maturation into adult sexuality shocks her and disclosure of her own femaleness draws her away from femininity emotionally rejecting her sexuality. She admits:

"I didn't like that. I never will marry with any boy."

(McCullers, 1940: 273)

As Constance M. Perry puts it:

"Harry runs away that night and in the days that follow Mick is possessed by fear. Her fear is not that she is pregnant. Instead, she thinks that in becoming an adult woman, she has somehow annihilated her artistic identity. Harry's guilty flight from his sexual intimacy with Mick, and indeed from the town itself, forces Mick to realize that to be female is to be somehow shameful and obscene." (Perry, 1986: 43)

This conflict between ambition and the pressure of conventional femininity is confronted by both Mick and Jaya. Mick is trapped in her frustrating domestic responsibilities. In spite of her ambition to become a great composer she has to stay home baby-sitting. She drags this burden behind her and wanders with her brother Bubber. She loses this freedom of wandering along dark sidewalks when she accepts her sexual status.

Jaya also is trapped in this conflict between the ambition to create her own identity and her domestic responsibilities as traditional wife. The question of identity haunts her so obsessively that she fails to find herself. In a stifling and suffocating domestic chores and sexuality both Jaya and Mick have lost their female identity. This dilemma is expressed in Jaya's confused state of mind:

"I could and couldn't do, all the things that were womanly and unwomanly..." (Deshpande, 1989: 83)

Since her marriage, she has done nothing but wait.

"Waiting for Mohan to come home, waiting for the children to be born, for them to start school, waiting for them to come home,

waiting for the milk, the servant, the lunch-carrier man."

(Deshpande, 1989: 30)

This 'waiting all the time' becomes a mechanical process for her and fills her life with existential nothingness. Mick and Jaya both are victims of circumstances, which prevent them from at least trying to find their "inner room". These women find themselves in patriarchal ties where norms about how a woman should behave or dress are rigidly followed. They are caught in the conflict between the need for familial security and individual freedom. Compromise is the word with which all women in the modern world are living, binding their own ways and alienating their true self to order to secure her position in the family. Mick and Jaya opt for compromise not under social pressure; it can be termed as an act of choice. They decide to remain within their familial ties but are conscious of their individual identity. Though alienated by the failure of their dreams it can't be treated as defeat at all. Their psychic dependence on family is a result of their sense of guilt and loss that make them realize their 'self' fully. At first, it seems that women characters in both novels are without any hope for the future. But it is clear at the ends of these novels that both the protagonists Mick and Jaya intermingles an ephemeral vision of bright future with bleakness of the past. They have an optimism to reach out with some hope to the future. As Louise Westling puts it:

"In modern life these pressures exert themselves subtly, woven as they are throughout the texture of adolescent experience. But they produce a fear that to be a female and to dare to achieve is to venture into dangerous territory, to violate one's gender, to become a kind of freak. The girl who insists on following her ambitions almost inevitably pays the price of shame

and guilt as an adult; she must live with a troubled sense of herself as a woman because she has abandoned the familiar boundaries of her gender.”

(Westling, 1985: 113)

This problem of feminine independence and violation of gender in these protagonists lead them to alienation.

Ego plays as an obstacle in the development of human psyche. In Jaya, Mohan and Singer ego paralyzes their vision leaving them alone in their own biased worlds. The separation from Antonapoulos has already hurt Singer's fragile ego. As a child he suffered from agony as deaf-child who tried to talk but was wounded by "*the blank expression on people's faces*". (pp.11) He was not mute but after these humiliating experiences he turned to sign language rejecting verbal communication. This act of renouncing language separates him from the rest of the society. He concludes with his wounded ego that his speech was disgusting and people can never understand his language. When his only friend, with whom he can lay bare his heart with sign language, is admitted to asylum he conceals his hands showing his inability to use that sign language with anyone else again. When Singer hears that Antonapoulos is dead, he tries to get his hands out of his pocket. After great difficulty, he gets his hands out of pocket but he lets his hands dangle loosely. After that he commits suicide.

Ego is another factor in the intensifying of alienation. Jaya feels guilty because in her childhood she secretly enjoyed the songs of Rafi and Lata, maternal ads preceding the movies in spite of her father's insistence on classical music of Paluskar and Faiyaz Khan. Her ego in her feeling or sense of being unique splits her consciousness. There is conflict between her self and her ego. As Adesh Pal puts it:

“The essential communication between her wounded ego and the self is missing in her childhood. She is left psychologically insecure and the unconscious ghost of the fear of insecurity what she tries to get rid of by marrying Mohan Haunts her throughout her life.” (Pal, 1995: 75)

Similarly absence of her place in the family tree is a symbol of her sense of insecurity. Jaya feels hurt by Ramukaka’s words when he says that she has no place there because she is a part of Mohan’s family. This negative ego inflation enhances her alienation and she tries to find her place at Mohan’s home, failing to which she worsens her alienated situation.

The central idea of these novels is man’s spiritual isolation and there are many themes that move around the central idea and point to it. Themes such as adolescent initiation, racial and gender discrimination, the dangers of materialistic world actually substantiate the central idea. Another major factor which alienates man is his undue faith in somebody. People think that one Messiah will come and solve all their problems and they attach god-like qualities to one person whom they consider as their god-surrogate. When their god-like fails to fulfill their expectations, they are shattered, disillusioned and left alone in the world full of miseries for them. In *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* every character fails in his attempt to solve both personal and social problems. They turn to Singer because he is the only one with whom they can imagine a perfect communication. Singer understands very little but they use him as a vehicle through which they can create their own worlds of illusions. He is associated with the image of Christ because they imagine that he can listen to and solve their problems. This ironic self-deception leads them towards illusion and isolation. The deaf-mute Singer is a symbol of infirmity. He has been viewed from different perspectives by critics. Chester E. Eisinger puts in this regard as:

“It has been claimed that Singer has a God-like function in the novel, but I prefer to see him as the figure of the Virgin Mother and the Son. He has none of the terrible majesty of God, but he does represent for the others [an] all-embracing, comforting, maternal force... [The other characters] do not exist for him, either intellectually or emotionally, in any consequential way. Yet he is at the centre of their lives. He is, although they do not yet know it, the false Virgin and the false Son.” (Eisinger, 1980: 422)

As Biff describes him he is a home-made God and each of the characters look up to him to satisfy his own emotional needs. They all yearn for peace and harmony and only in God they can find it. When Mick whispers some words: “*Lord forgiveth me, for I knoweth not what I do*” (pp. 101), she remembers Mr. Singer. She says the words again as she would speak them to Singer. Singer becomes a symbolic God-figure for her. Willie also assumes Singer’s role as Christ in the anti-racist social theme. The text ‘All Men seek for Thee’ reminds some men of Singer.

Even Jake Blount and Dr. Copeland would be called as Gods-saviors. They are saviors who want to save men from social injustices. But they are rejected by people in that role. Jake is as much a Christ figure as is Singer but he can’t fulfill that role. As Sam Bluefarb puts it:

“Like Jesus, though certainly not for the same reasons, Jake is rejected and “despised of men”, he is cast out by the people whom he would save- in a sense “crucified” by them” (Bluefarb, 1972: 124)

The need for love is more prominent for Jake although all characters share the same sense of alienation.

Dr. Copeland is also God-figure to Negro race but like Jake he is not fully understood by his people. He is disgusted when his father says:

"Jesus Christ, us is all sad colored peoples". (McCullers, 1940: 124) In his hatred to religion that puts men in some sort of shackles he prophesizes his attitude: *"The whole Negro race was sick"* (McCullers, 1940: 69)

If Singer is related to Christ, he, in turn has his own god-surrogate. He looks up to Antonapoulos, who often refuses to communicate. Singer takes Antonapoulos as his god-surrogate. As Portia compares Singer to John the Baptist, Singer plays that role when Antonapoulos is his Christ. This structure is revealed in Singer's pyramid dream. (pp.215) It shows Antonapoulos at top, singer just below, and the four disciples- Brannon, Kelly, Blount and Copeland form the base. This dream reveals the mindset of all these characters that look at others as their messiah who will redeem their misfortunes. Antonapoulos also looks upward, at some object and that is the cross that he wears around his neck.

The death of God at the end is anticlimactic. All characters understand the futility of their dreams and hopes and all are doomed to frustration. As a product of mass wish-fulfillment Singer fails to understand their feelings and all are disillusioned with the suicide of Singer.

In *That Long Silence* also this kind of disillusionment is a part of alienation. Shashi Deshpande upholds marriage as the social infrastructure of healthy society. But it is also an institution where women find themselves disillusioned. Women try to free themselves from patriarchal clutches where they have no place and take marriage as an anchorage. Similarly when Jaya doesn't find a place in Ramukaka's family tree, she tries to find it in Mohan's home. But she is disillusioned to learn that she has no place, being a woman either in maternal home or in husband's home.

In our country, marriage is not based necessarily on love. A wife and husband can maintain their relationship without any affection. But it has

been seen that the major cause of the survival of marriage institution is that of tolerance of women. Since her childhood a girl is always taught to consider her husband as God:

“A husband is like sheltering tree...Take your pain between your teeth, bite on it, don't let it escape...” (Deshpande, 1989: 32)

A husband is always a sheltering tree so women have to follow the footsteps of their husbands. A husband is a god-surrogate who protects his wife from all miseries and gives her honour in society. A woman without husband has no dignity in society. Therefore women like Jeeja and Tara tolerate all tortures of wife-beating and drinking of husband. Jaya frets over the metaphor of “sheltering tree”:

“A sheltering tree. Without the tree, you are dangerously unprotected... equally, logically and vulnerably. This followed logically. And so you have to keep the tree alive and flourishing, even if you have to water it with deceit and lies. This too followed equally logically.” (Deshpande, 1989: 32)

So Jaya herself rejects this god-surrogate notion of religion. A person who crushes both the woman and the writer in Jaya is her husband, Mohan. He is an ordinary man and lacks the qualities that Singer has. At least Singer can assume the role of god-surrogate, but being mute he is a passive supporter and companion to his disciples. Mohan lacks these qualities. He wants his wife to be a mute supporter. In her disillusionment in marriage Jaya rejects the mythical women who are the symbols of suffering and who considered their husbands as gods. She rejects to be Seeta who led a miserable life and had to give an evidence of her sanctity. She also rejects to be Gandhari who blindfolded her eyes to become blind like her husband.

No doubt Jaya considered marriage to be an escape from the bondages of orthodox family. Mohan wanted convent-educated wife and Jaya thought that he is modern and could give her freedom to seek her identity. But all her illusions are shattered after marriage when Mohan objects her themes as it threatens to their status and prestige in society. Thus deification leads people to their illusory worlds and when their surrogate gods fail to perform godlike duties, their dreams and hopes fall apart and in their disillusionment they aggravate their isolation.

Today in this commercial world, escape from troubles is associated with the failure to cope up with life. In a way all the characters use escape motif to end the hopelessness and confusion. In American literature escape from life is a dominant theme and it is reflected in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. Escape is not just geographical, it is spiritual also. All the characters in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* except Mick and Brannon try to escape from alienation which is a result of discontent. Jake is a habitual escaper who is always on the move. It is his inability to settle down shows his inability to cope up with life situations. Dr. Copeland also renounces his activities of reform owing to his ill-health. Singer, unable to bear torments of loneliness escapes by finishing himself. Jaya, Mohan, Mick and Brannon these are characters who fight back to the situation, try to mould themselves according to the tunes of life. Mohan leaves home in anger but returns after all is settled. Jaya is on the verge of breaking of marriage, but she can't think of herself without Mohan so she tries to cope up and her optimism assures her that everything will be made possible. Mick starts to support her family keeping alive her dreams in her mind and Brannon also draws his attention after the death of Singer and try to cope up in stead of giving up. Many

critics have argued that only androgyns are capable to rebel against loneliness. As Patricia S. Box puts it:

“Only the androgyns are guided by music, and only they are capable of lifting themselves out of the world of superficiality and creating a universe in which people genuinely care about one another. The necessary ingredient for creating this human unity is love, not a sexual love, but a love that denies sex and strives to encompass everyone equally.”(Box, 1988: 230)

Few people seek escape in positive way from isolation. Only androgyns are capable of love that unites mankind and keep themselves away from alienation. Characters in these novels suffer from the pangs of nostalgia which is a natural consequence of loneliness and they try to hide from it. Thus a vacuum create by this loneliness is altered only by time. Thus both the novels *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and *That Long Silence* present a larger pattern of frustration and alienation. All the characters confront with the pain of being left alone, the failure of initiation, the betrayal of love and the traumas of loneliness. Both private and social issues have been discussed dexterously by both the novelists. Individual misconceptions or misunderstandings result into collective isolation. A feeling of estrangement and the mutual distrust result into collective alienation. After analyzing both these novels thematically in comparative terms, we find that both the novelists find ‘love’ as a factor that alienates and also brings together society. Every character in the discussed novels longs for love and communion. Love is the central element and often ambiguous and if one can not understand the ideology of love, he is more prone to be left alone. The ideology of love flows throughout the writings of Carson McCullers and Shashi Deshpande. As R. Bruce Brasell puts it:

“The first axiom of this ideology is: love is never reciprocal. This nonreciprocity, which is the result of difference, in turn creates a metadifference, levelling us all to the same position. If because of difference our love is never reciprocated and love separates us all equally, then our difference becomes our similarity... Because according to this ideology love cannot be reciprocated, we are all positioned similarly, whether we love someone of the same sex of different sex, same race or different race. We are all ultimately alone.” (Brasell, 1997: 63)

So love plays the roles of catalyst casting out fear and we find security in togetherness. The spirit of individualism and dehumanization has generated in men a sense of loneliness and emotional void. Both the novelists though belonging to different periods have successfully presented the quest of love and alienated selves of heir time. One feels unknown and unprotected if he finds himself unable to love. So the quest of man should not be for identity or worldly pleasures but the goal of man’s quest should be love in its pure form. It should not be constructed on romantic or sexual sense. All characters in both novels search for this love and in their quest they have two choices- 1) Compromise and 2) Remain alienated pursuing your goals or running after false aims. Mick, Jaya try to compromise and surrender to the life situations. But they do not forget their dreams or quest but they are not rigid or flat. They are ready to mould. Singer, Blount and Dr. Copeland are too rigid to cope up with life situations and in order to find perfect love they end up in alienation. Carson McCullers is in no way a feminist writer. But both Carson McCullers and Shashi Deshpande are critics of society. They challenge orthodox roles that also include discrimination on the basis of gender, race and class.

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