Tota Mulire in Utero ‘Woman is womb’.

Simone de Beauvoir: The Second Sex

WHEN cynical witticism propounds that ‘marriage is a legalised prostitution’, the crux of antagonism does not so much come from the remark that ‘none amongst us would like to be called the son of a prostitute’, but from the realisation that

The traditional concept of marriage, according to which marriage was considered to be a sacrament joining together two human beings in eternal and indissoluble union, was in itself responsible for making people accept their marital situations ungrudgingly and hence for not considering adjustment in marriage a problem’.¹

This holy sacrament has been expressed through varying nomenclatures down the ages by the people rocked in different cradles and suckled in distinct ‘creeds outworn’, and has seen the saffron robed Hymen clad in many a rainbow clouds; the catholics term it as nuptial mass; the Hindus call it sampadi the heptapodial circumambulation; the Islam mentions it as thrice accepted qaboolma-ul-nikah; the Sikhism, with the offering of a holy shawl to be worn as a veil, expresses it as a pious and delightful deed or Anand Karaj; the essential semiotics of a husband or specific ladenness of vi(specific) vah (load of looking after the domestic affairs).

In general terms, marriage is described as the union of a man and woman to live together as husband and wife according to the standard set out in the holy scriptures. Some people say that marriage is socially permitted, legally agreed or religiously allowed sexual partnership. A civilized way of this expression varies from people to people. The institution of marriage is the oldest and natural one. During the last few thousand years of our cultural history, marriage and extended family has been the basis of our social structure. Since the pre Roman era the institution of marriage
has been a matter of contracts, at first between families, and later between the parties themselves with passage of time, the form picked up certain religious trapping, then state sanction, and finally today it comes to us encrusted and hoary with centuries tangled in its hair. But it is still basically considered a contract under broad head of jurisprudence.

Marriage in Sikhism is regarded as a sacred bond of mutual help in attaining the heights of worldly life and spiritual bliss. It is a unity of mind and soul, a means to attain spirituality and not an end in itself; the real goal of Sikhism being union of the two souls with Almighty. Muslim view marriage as the foundation of society family life. In holy Qur’an the marriage relationship is described as one with “tranquility”, “love”, and “mercy”. Elsewhere in the Qur’an husband and wife are described as “garments” for each other. “Garments offer protection, comfort, modesty and warmth”. Marriage provides for intimate relationship between husband and wife with a feeling of love, commitment and mutual security. Its object is harmonious partnership in life, love, procreation, legalizing of children and union with God. ‘God’ Himself after He created Adam, made the observation: “It is not good for the man to live alone. I will make a suitable companion to help him”. The nature and intimacy of husband and wife relationship is,

And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourself, that you may dwell intranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your heart. Verily in that are signs for their who reflect.

The marriage between man and woman accords with God’s will and is not a natural development that gradually grew out of man’s experience...God instituted marriage, for the well-being and happiness of his people; for the purpose of establishing the home as the first and most important unit of society, in which children are to be born to perpetuate the human race...To perpetuate the human race, God created man male and female, and blessing them, He said, “Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth”.

This means that God ordained cohabitation, or sexual intercourse as an expression of love and for the purpose of begetting children.
God wants marriage to be a life long union between one man and one woman... Wilt thou love her (him) in sickness and in health and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto her (him) so long as ye you both shall live.6

According to Encyclopedia Americana,

While the original form of marriage is lost in the oblivion prehistorical period, it is safe to say that during historical times some form of marriage has been present in all societies.7

Thus, the marriage which is considered as,

The most enduring and intimate relationship between man and woman is formalized in an institution older than recorded history and it is called marriage.8

According to Jeremy Taylor,

Marriage is the mother of the world.9

Dr. Johnson defines,

Marriage is the strictest tie or perpetual friendship and there can be no friendship without confidence and there can be no confidence without integrity, and he must expect to be wretched, who pays beauty, riches and politeness that regard which only virtue and piety can claim.

According to Promila Kapur,

Marriage is a Sanskara and as such it is a sacrament and a religious bond which can not be broken under any circumstances. Ideally, it aims not only at the individual’s biological, emotional, social and spiritual fulfilments and development through union with a person of the opposite sex, but also at the development, fulfilment and welfare of the family, and through it of the society and mankind.10

Guru Amar Das says,

They are not said to be husband and wife who merely have physical contact only. Rather they alone are called husband and wife who have one soul in two bodies.11
In Indian marriage is “mithaq”—a solemn covenant (agreement). It is not a matter which can be taken lightly. It should be entered into with total commitment and full knowledge of what it involves. It is not buying a new dress where you can exchange it if you don’t like it. Your partner should be your choice for life. One should be mature enough to understand the demands of marriage so that the union can be a lasting one. For a marriage to be valid certain conditions must be met. The tradition-oriented Indian society has experienced various changes in the last six or seven decades. The process of industrialisation has made it a desideratum for woman to come out of the forewalls of house and to become a co-earner of bread and butter; this has made her to bear the brunt of caring children and looking after domestic affairs, in addition to what she does in her working place; thus she become overburden mentally and physically as well.

Indeed, of the greatest achievements of the women’s movement so far has been to challenge the division between public and private life imposed by bourgeois society, and to show that personal relationship are social and political.\(^\text{12}\)

Thus, Angela Carter points out that,

Sexual relations between men and women always render explicit the nature of social relations in the society in which they take place and if described explicitly, will form a critique of those relations...\(^\text{13}\)

Writing in the early 1970s in The Fiction of Sex the critic Rosalind exercising looked forward towards “a narrow concentration upon the minutiae of women’s lives, the emphasis on domestic difficulties and sexual sorrows.”\(^\text{14}\)
The recognition of the cultural construction of sexuality carries, of course, profound implications for women in which a male supremacist culture exerts on the sexual aspects of our lives when the couples were interviewed, and their bedroom life was explored, it was revealed to the utter surprise:

...that in the matter of sexual harmony also, it was the accordant sexual response, in its physical as well as emotional aspects, and adjustability and accommodating temperaments
of the spouses that contributed to harmony and adjustment and not only similarity in their sexual impulse complex as much.\textsuperscript{15}

It is not only a universal but transgenic phenomenon, but it is strange that the female species too is initializing for the term \textit{female} ‘brings up in his mind a sarabawd of imagery—a vast, round ovum engulfs and castrates the agila spermatozoon; the monstrous and swollen termite queen rules over enslaved males; the female praying mantis and the the spider, satiated with love, crush and devour their, partners; the bitch in heat runs through the alleys, trailing behind her a wake of immodestly and then steals away with hypocritical eaqmetry’.\textsuperscript{16}

In exploring male dominance in the area of sexuality Piercy, Toder and Honscombe all take a radical approach. They treat sexual intercourse and the primacy accorded to it in contemporary society as the cornerstone of male supremacy. In this they argue with Millet and other radical feminist theorists whose argument describes sexuality, with variations along a continuum of masculine aggression (from the celebration of penetration to the brutality of rape), as the site in which male power and male supremacy are expressed. Koedt points out that since knowledge (sexual knowledge in particular) is controlled by men, it is they who define and describe female sexual response. The consequence is, emphasis is placed on vaginal penetration while the importance of clitoral sex is marginalized or even ignored sometimes they have to submit to \textit{coitus} or also. A male supremacist culture, Koedt points out, finds the idea of clitoral sex extremely threatening since it enables women to be sexually independent of men, tending to female gratification even without the help of a male partner. Sexual discourse and practice emerge as male-defined. Clitoral sex is disapproved of; a woman’s desire for it is interpreted as proof that she is ‘sexually immature’, ‘not a real women’. To the male characters it signifies not only pleasure but, in accord with radical feminist views, a means to control women and recruit them into their service. It functions also as proof of manhood—something to brag about to one’s buddies in the dorm. For the female character, on the other hand, intercourse is associated with romantic love and self-sacrifice. It signifies the ultimate act of surrender—one undertaken
at great personal risk, since contraceptive devices if one is unmarried, are
difficult to obtain.

A key concept in feminist theory, one which underpins the women’s
Movement’s analysis of the subordinate status assigned to women in
phallic culture, is the distinction between biological sex on the one
hand, and socially constructed gender on the other such a concept involves
the recognition that, while the sex of the individual depends on anatomy,
gender is a culturally constructed artefact. Angela Carter, whose novel *The
Passion of New Eve* (1977) furnishes a delightfully witty example of the
fictional representation of the concept, expresses the distinction as follows:

> There is the unarguable fact of sexual differentiation; but
> separate from it and only partially derived from it, are the
> behavioural modes of masculine and feminine, which are
culturally defined variables translated in the language of
common usage to the status of universals.\(^\text{17}\)

Innumerable novels and short stories have been inspired by the concept
of cultural making of gender, for it forms the foundation stone of a feminist
demand for equality on sexual base and consequent women’s liberation; in
a phallic culture woman is defined with reference to the body and
sexual reproduction, along with their polluting ailments, desires and ‘pains’.

That the simultaneous treatment of marriage love and sex is
unavoidable while establishing the dictum of female sexuality, appears to
hold no water when it is observed that feminist critiques on this subject
tries to the justification of female sexuality amidst the confinements of
monogamous, heterosexual and legally sanctioned unification of man and
woman. Women and girls who have sex outside marriage are still regarded
as promiscuous, or more colloquially as slags and sluts; unmarried mothers
are still unable to legitimise their children without getting married. In the
views of Mary Astell, though women were often inferior to men on account of
their ‘want of Learning’, She saw no reason why they should accept
‘the Natural Inferiority’ of their sex as a ‘self evident and fundamental
truth’ : She stated that, “The Relation between the two Sexes is mutual,
and the Dependence reciprocal”.\(^\text{18}\)
She regretted that men did not accept this reciprocal basis of man-woman relationship and in fact demanded from women total submission. The ideal of a happy marriage among the English gentry in the eighteenth century was based on “strong physical attraction, mutual esteem, and steadfast companionship. Upon esteem rested the other two. Without it attraction became lust, and companionship could never develop.”

So far as socio-economic emancipation is concerned, it should be borne in mind that Indian society is tradition oriented, and has witnessed considerable changes; the ideology of love, marriage and sex are not the same as they had been centuries ago; Indian couple has to carve its way like the two wheels of a chariot of household. The tradition-oriented Indian society has experienced various changes in the last six or seven decades. The processes of industrialisation, urbanisation and secularisation have brought about politico-economic cultural and socio-psychological changes in the life patterns and attitudes of the most fundamental and far reaching social changes brought about after India’s independence has been the emancipation of women from their tradition ridden ethos, which has resulted in the entering of women of middle and upper classes into remunerative vocations that were largely the preserves of men. The relationship between man and woman has gained the vitality of metamorphosis on the basis of changed chain of thoughts comprising love, marriage and sex; it is because woman as a species was fed up with being a passive receptacle so far as vaginal penetration was concerned; but now she has been able to play the role of Arion on Dolphin’s back so far as her floating existence on the waves of Proteus oriented patriarchy in the peninsular Indian sub-continent is the nucleus in question; yet at the same time she has failed to reject totally her social and cultural background. She stands therefore at crossroads, caught between tradition and modernity.

The traditional concept of marriage, according to which marriage was considered to be a sacrament, joining together two human beings in eternal and indissoluble union, was itself responsible for making people accept their marital ungrudgingly and hence for not considering adjustment in a marriage a problem. As a consequence of this ideology, husband and wife after marriage had to make efforts to adjust to one another’s tastes and temperaments by subordinating personal gratification and by making
compromises between themselves rather than breaking with each other in the event of differences and dissimilarities. Referring to the injunction laid down by Manu in his Manusmriti with regard to the conduct of husband and wife, Prabhu says:

Manu further adds that once they are united by the nuptial ceremony, they always exert themselves to see that they are never at variance with each other, and they ever remain faithful to each other.19

Kapadia, while discussing the concept of the traditional Hindu marriage and family life, writes,

Marriage was a social duty toward the family and community, and there was little idea of individual interest. The social background provided by the authoritarian joint-family, and caste with its domination in all spheres of life, afforded no scope for the recognition of any personal factor, individual interests, and aspirations, in the relations between husband and wife.20

Describing the traditional norms of Indian society, Dube writes;

According to the traditional norms of the society a husband is expected to be authoritarian figure whose will should always dominate the domestic scene...the wife should regard him as her ‘master’ and should ‘serve him faithfully’...The husband is ‘superior’, the wife is his ‘Subordinate’.21

Indian couple, like Donne’s lovers, together make a world of their own. Each is incomplete without the other. In a Hindu family no religious rite can be performed by a spouse without another. Though a man and a woman become complementary to each other through marriage, there is not certainly regarding their mutual love for each other. There is a grain of truth in Nirad C. Chaudhuri’s light-hearted remark that,

Marriage between a man and a woman is like the relationship between a shirt and tie—’either a good contrast or matching’.22

Karyeshu Mantri, Karaneshu Daasi,
Reheesa Lakshmi, Kshamayaa Dharitrii,
Bhojyeshu Mata, Shyaneshu Rambha,
Shat Karma Yukta, Kula Dharma Patni

(Like a slave while serving; a minister when counselling, Goddess Lakshmi in her looks; the earth in forbearance; a mother while feeding; Rambha, the celestial prostitute in bed; these six are the true characteristic of an ideal wife).

The citadel of traditional Indian wifehood was broken into with the emergence of Western education, otherwise in Hindu scriptures, the matrimonial ceremony leads husband and wife to a certain oneness; the position of husband and wife is clearly defined; but with the growing emphasis on education, the Indian women experienced freedom and struggled to improve her lot, for education brought economic independence of women which in turn changed their outlook, and the traditional equation of superior husband and inferior wife. The traditional concept of love and marriage as Sacrament and Sex as a taboo is fast fading and losing its importance. As Promilla Kapur, the renowned sociologist has concluded that women now aspire for “natural companionship, respect, material comforts, satisfaction of emotional and physical needs, in marriage.”

A long felt need in India, the land of Vatsayana’s *Kamasutra*, has seen its fulfilment with the emergence of woman as an active and pleasure seeking partner in the game of sex; and thus the aesthetico physical nature and role of sex in a woman’s life is emphasized, as Promilla Kapur envisages:

All these findings suggest that the negative attitude towards sex or that of condemnation has not ground considerably and positive attitude regarding sex as one of the needs of every human being is emerging.

Anuradha Roy expresses the same view:

Marital relationships have almost inevitably been the focal points of novels written by women. But there is a quantitative difference in tone and perception in novels which adopt an explicit or implicit feminist stance. The emphasis is not on the development or mechanics of the relationship but on the forces
which work together to make the relationship a farcical
exhibition of togetherness. Functioning along fixed parameters,
marriges become an arid formality, devoid of contact.26

By virtue of her craft of fiction, oriented as exemplifying the concept
that ‘words must be cousins to deeds’, Shashi Deshpande, an eminent
novelist, emerging as a writer possessing deep insight into the female
psyche, dealt with the problem of new women, by concentrating on the
theme of meaningless and sexual confusion suffered by women in tradition-
oriented institutions. Focusing on the marital relations she exposes the
tradition training of the woman to play her subservient role in the family;
the reality of modern Indian woman is that even to the basic needs of life
like love, marriage and sex, she is in a state of utter confusion, for coming
out of home, having seen the world on her own, she has developed
different attitudes towards such an aspect of life. On account of playing the
role of a rebel against the shackles of tradition, an Indian woman feels a
kind of imbalance between the traditional expectations and her new sexual
demands causing her to suffer, question and look for solutions.

The novels of Shashi Deshpande, apart from revealing man-made
patriarchal tyranny and tolerance of womankind, display the novelist’s
capability of showing the right path to the feminist psyche loitering in the
pathless wood of a subservient existence; such a path is the desideratum
primum of a happy and blessed married life, emancipation through
education and enlightenment of a middle class female breadwinner. The
novelist deals with the theme of marriage, sex and extra marital relations.
The theme of Marriage and Sex is presented in the novels, *The Long
Silence* and *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, while *Roots and Shadows* has the
theme of extra marital relations too. Even though the situations in the
three novels are different, her treatment of the theme, howsoever identical
the message conveyed in all the three novels is not exactly the same.
These novels teach, in the verisimilitude of knotted rice and matriarchal
sermon to the departing bride that like an ideal wife, she should enter the
threshold of groom’s house in a palanquin, but her foot outside must be
on the bier; her husband be a deity to her; like Coleridge’s Albatross, she
is to come back to the Ancient Mariner’s ship, be it a demise to her; the
relationship between husband and wife is hepta-incarnatory (seven cycles of birth and death) in nature.

In *Roots and Shadows* Shashi Deshpande dwells upon the problems, of how a woman brought up in orthodox, traditional and rural background, has to cope with when she gets modern education and enters the marriage of her own choice with a person belonging to the elite class tuned to western culture—the so-called modern society. In the novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, she deals with the psychological problems, of how an educated woman professionally qualified, earning not only the bread but also the butter for the family has to face the slings and arrows of misfortunes, when she marries a person not so highly qualified professionally and having a lower financial, therefore, social status; though with perfect obliquity, she develops a Jocasta like relationship for her Oedipus though on a psychological level. The parallelism of structure, contents and social historiography comprising the lower strata women doing the menial jobs such as utensil cleaning, looking after interior decoration at primary level on one hand and the educated middle class ladies enjoying a bit of financial independence on the other, is the theme of the novel *Roots and Shadows*, yet on both the levels, a woman is expected to make her nuptial chambers as happy as she can do, for matrimonial failure leads her to Hyades, ruled by Pluto.

*The Dark Holds No Terrors* opens up a new panorama, as it makes Saru, the heroine, never forget that she is a girl; she is told again and again that, by virtue of being a girl, she is no more than a burden and a liability; it is her destiny that she will be transferred to another shoulder at some proper and auspicious time; the result of all this is that Saru becomes antagonistic to the very concept of marriage. The bitterness that had crept into their relationship after Dhruva’s death and her mother’s constant reminder, that she is a girl, makes the growing Saru conscious of her sexuality. Saru grows up hating her womanhood that consisted of feeling impure and ashamed of one’s sexuality and living with the sole purpose of getting married. She vows to rebel against such traditions and in spite of her mother’s objection joins a medical college in Bombay. The study of anatomy and physiology makes womanhood acceptable to her.
She begins to enjoy her female identity and learns to dress and walk gracefully. She was fascinated by Manu (Manohar), his multifaceted personality of a good student, secretary of literary association, an active member of the dramatic society, a budding writer and a poet of promise, had made him a college hero. Their second meeting triggers a romance and Manu with lost glory and declining future immediately responds to the now attractive Saru’s interest in him. He is, obviously, the heartthrob of many a girl student. Saru is introduced to Manu by her friend Smita. She becomes aware of Manu’s growing interest in her, and this longing is culminated into love and the protagonist with her ‘sick hurry and divided aims’ rushes into marriage; this marriage out of the bondage of caste displays another sense of rebellion in her this becomes evident, when she reveals to her mother the intention of marrying Manu:

What caste is he?
I don’t know
A Brahmin
Of course, not
Then cruelly... “His father keeps a cycle shop.
oh, so they are low-caste people, are they?

The word her mother had used, with the disgust, hatred and prejudice of centuries had so enraged her that she had replied... “I hope so”.

It is a proud privilege for Saru to be chosen by Manu, for her craving for attention and hypnotic magnetism is fulfilled in this case, though it becomes a pleasant surprise for her. Manu finds himself on the ‘vantage of ground of truth’ and from there he gets the pleasure of other boy friends of Saru growing pale into insignificance Saru is made to think:

The fisherman’s daughter couldn’t have been more surprised when the king asked her to marry him, than I was by Manu’s love for me (66).

Many years later, in a retrospective mood, however, she feels: “The fisherman’s daughter, was wiser. She sent the king to her father and it was the father who bargained with him, while I... I gave myself up unconditionally, unreservedly to him, to love him and to be loved” (66).
Saru’s marrying Manu, and her claim to have thereby severed the umbilical cord, is an act of defiance proving her strength, power and self-reliance. The mother’s Parthian shot, “I know all these ‘love marriages: It’s love for a few days, then quarrels all the time. Don’t come crying to us then” (62). is a sure prediction of Saru’s future and failure. All things considered, however, it only seems fair to admit that Saru’s mother and father had important roles to play, each in his and her own way in the factors that led to her marriage with Manu. The initial years of her marriage are sheer bliss when she thinks that she is the luckiest woman on earth. With marriage she experiences the joy of discovering her sexuality. As S. P. Swain observes,

She marries to attain autonomy of the self and to secure to the lost love in her parental home. Manu is her saviour, the ideal romantic hero who reuses her from her insecure, wooden existence in her maternal home. Her marriage with Manu is an assertion on and affirmation of her feminine sensibility.²⁸

Dr. Gregory describes,

A man of taste and delicacy marries a woman because he loves her more than any other. A woman of equal taste and delicacy marries him because she esteems him, and because he gives her that preference.²⁹

Elizabeth Bennet, realises that she loves Darcy and would gladly accept him as her husband. Jane Austen, the author, breathlessly describes her state of mind: “She respected, she esteemed, she was grateful to him, she felt a real interest in his welfare.”³⁰

A character of Sarah Scott pertinently asks;

Which is more desirable, his esteem or his courtship?

She then gives an answer which is eminently sensible:

If you really love him, you can make no comparison between them; for surely there cannot be a greater suffering than to stand low in the opinion of any person who has a great share of our affections.³¹
Jane West says,

I do not choose to hold up matrimony as the great desideratum of our sex: I wish them to look to the general esteem of worthy people and the approbation of their own hearts, for the recompense of their merit, rather than to the particular addresses of a lover.\(^{32}\)

She elsewhere says,

How poor...is the woman's boast, who is conscious that she rather gratifies the vanity, than charms the heart of the husband.\(^{33}\)

In her initial euphoric state, Saru thinks:

I was insatiable, not for sex, but for love. Each act of sex was a triumphant assertion of our love. Of my being loved. Of my being wanted. (40)

After her marriage, she reveals in the act of love with a wild abandon. Though Saru had known and loved Manu, she was quite unnerved at the thought of marriage. It was perhaps the fear of sex, the unknown, commitment, responsibilities, or loss of freedom. But the reality proved otherwise. Despite the unclean atmosphere of their small room, sex seemed a clean act, with a holiness and piety of procreation. She describes her dingy one-room apartment in which they first lived, as 'heaven on earth'. She is blissfully content in spite of "the corridors smelling of urine, the rooms with their dark sealed in odours, women with inquisitive, unfriendly eyes, men with lascivious stares" (40).

The attitude to sex undergoes a change, during adolescence, Saru thought that sex was a shame, then an embarrassment, then a matter of pride, and after marriage a source of enjoyment:

After the first moment of apprehension...a purely physical response, or lack of it, rather...there was, never any withholding in me. I become in an instant a physically aroused woman, with an infinite capacity for loving and giving, with a passionate desire to be absorbed by the man I loved. All the clichés, I
discovered, were true, kisses were soft and unbearably sweet, embraces hard and passionate, hand caressing and tender and loving, as well as being loved, was an intense joy. It was as little nerve ends of pleasure had sprung up all over my body (34-35).

But happiness, as she soon discovered is only an illusion and one is left with memories, which are weighed with grief. On the first instance, a woman opposes the role of a daughter and thinks that her metamorphosis as a wife will assist her in winning freedom; she has taken a momentous decision which only proves to be an anticlimax, like Caliban becoming the slave of Stephano and Trinquilo, Saru marries out of her caste and her second home becomes the very prison she had escaped. Saru does not observe the slow change in her husband, in the initial exhilaration at her exalted status as a doctor. In a retrospective mood, much later, however, she is able to trace the events which lead to the disastrous condition of her marriage. The respect that Saru gets disturbs the traditional equilibrium of the superior husband and inferior wife. This proves the hidden truth underlying the dictum ‘today you place a woman equal to you, tomorrow she will become superior to you’. The meager income that Manu used to get from his job of a college lecturer and their one room in chawl did not interrupt their bliss. Basking in Manu’s love, Saru felt that she had achieved the traditional aim of being chosen by a “superior male”. Later analysing her marital relationship she recalls:

... But perhaps, the same thing that made me inches taller, made him inches shorter. He had been the young man and I his bride. No as I was the lady doctor and he was my husband (42).

The Brave New World explored by Saru becomes the prime cause of Manu’s attitude toward his wife, and he feels irritated and tire some, as he feels himself neglected and ignored every where on the other hand, what torments his conscience is that his wife gets regard and recognition, wherever she goes; all this results into a bedroom roughness in the life of this married couple. Saru’s ambition and her desire to attain comfortable life makes her take help of Boozie, a senior doctor and a philanderer. She
responds fittingly to his flirtatious manner and soon their relationship reaches a stage where Boozie helps her with enough money to set up her practice in a posh area. Saru stifles her scruples by telling herself. “I told myself my relationship with this man couldn’t, wouldn’t hurt Manu.”(91) Lord David Cecil, an eminent remarks: “It was wrong to marry for money, but it was silly to marry without it.” Boozie moulds Saru into a polished sophisticated urban woman and helps her career progress in leaps and bounds. As Y.S. Sunita Reddy opines,

Strictly speaking, there is nothing ‘physical’ in Saru’s affair with Boozie. To suit his own interests, Boozie openly flaunts his ‘relationship’ with Saru as a cover to his homosexuality.³⁴

That the feminist assertion concerning woman’s fulfilment through financial independence does not hold water, is proved in case of Saru, for when she earns more than her husband and leaves no stone unturned to keep her family happy, but her attempt is shattered, when Manu develops a sort of depression and guilt that he is an undergraduate lecturer, while Saru is a reputed doctor.

Deshpande, however, proves that in the institution of marriage, an economically independent woman is still bound in shackles and must forever live in fear of hurting the ego of her husband. He cannot dream of going back to the shabby middle class way of life. So he lets pass her relationship with Boozie with half-shut eyes. Hence Saru, finding a means to attain her dreams, moves forward while Manu retains his old position of a lecturer in a third grade college. This disparity deepens the rift in their relationship; but things change for the worse when a reporter from a woman’s magazine comes to interview Saru and asks Manu, “How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?” (200). This question makes Manu even more conscious of the reversed position held by them. The night Manu attacks and physically assaults her in bed. This right-marish incident is repeated and with increased brutality every time he is reminded of his inferior status; on sexual level bestiality replaces the sensibility of eroticism and aestheticism in married life. One such night Saru wakes up;
...The hurting hands, the savage teeth, the monstrous assault of a horribly familiar body. ...Then I began to struggle. But my body, hurt and painful, could do nothing against the fearful strength which overwhelmed me. ...And then, mercifully, the end, the face still hovering over mine, changing as the body relaxed, becoming the familiar known one of my husband’s. The face and body both are moving away to become a familiar huddled shape by my side”. (112).

Her mental conflict is expressed in a very realistic and touching manner:

It was a monstrous invasion of my body. I tried to move, twisting my body, wriggling under the weight that pinned it down. It was impossible. I was pinioned to a position of an object surrender of myself. I began, in sheer helplessness, to make small whimpering sounds, piteous cries...Now the horror of what was happening to me was lost in a fierce to end it. I could not would not, beat it. I began to fight ‘back helplessly, savagely. (11-12).

She can not turn back to her parents. Her husband has been saturating and assaulting her. She has no one to turn to. One can only wonder at the extraordinary insight of the author while painting Saru as a sexually violated woman. This indicates the virility of a man, though in an indirect manner, as Kamala Dass also expresses in her poem Looking Glass:

Notice the perfection
Of his limbs, his eyes renddening under
Shower, the shy walk across the bathroom floor,
Dropping towels, and the jerky way he
Urinates. All the fond details that make
Him male and your only man. Gift him all,
Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers.35
“I hate being touched”, Saru says. Saru craves for an ethereal and elemental existence. She is going through quite an abnormal pattern of life, who, “in the day time wore a white coat and an air of confidence and knowing and at night became a terrified, trapped animal” (132). The author comments; “This wasn’t something that had just happened to her. It was something she had helped to happen” (70). At times, the truth appears to be that she loses all regard for her husband when he fails to make it as a poet or an actor. She says. “I destroyed his manhood” (217) She realizes. The native hue of resolution is sickled with pale cast of thoughts, when Saru’s ambitions of confronting Manu are shattered, for the husband is quite normal, as if nothing had happened the precious night. Later, Saru recalls that Manu assaulted her whenever he was reminded of his economic dependence on her. The ingrained traditional values in Manu, which rigidly declared that it was husband’s duty to provide for the wife and children, make him feel that he is a failure. The fact that Saru, his wife, a subordinate member of the family, successfully retains his role, infuriates and frustrates the egoistic man in him. To satisfy his pride he employs the only means through which he can assert his manhood. He subjugates Saru by physically assaulting and raping her as he can find no other way to prove his superiority. Her effort to break the silence takes her to a lawyer, but the thought of talking about it and the social stigma of divorce, unnerves her. The colleague’s comment that he married a doctor became the reason of his frustration once again that night he became once again frustrated, as Saru later relates to her father.

I never knew till then he had so much strength in him... I couldn’t fight back. I couldn’t shout or cry. I was so afraid the children in the next room would hear. I could do nothing. I can never do anything. I just indure. (201).

Saru just wants to be his wife so that he does not resent any longer. She can’t stand his brutal behaviour and also that she is prepared to sacrifice everything as long as he leaves her alone. The prime cause of Saru’s irritation is Manu’s presumption that marriage is a life-long contract for respect, love and sex; this makes her evaluate the relative distinctions between love marriage and arranged marriage; the conclusion drawn by her puts her into a compromising situation, for Manu was her own choice,
though her parents never approved of it; hence she is responsible to share the entire blame. On hearing through her childhood friend, Manda, about her mother’s death Saru feels like seeing her father. This desire is aggravated by Manu’s behaviour and hence she goes to him, after a gap of 15 years. She expects a lot of sympathy from her father after having become a hapless victim of her senseless choice of a love marriage, she bemoans:

   It’s my fault again. If mine had been an arranged marriage, 
   If I had left it to them to arrange my life, would he have left 
   me like this? (218)

Saru is aware of the woman’s strength in going after arranged marriage. She reminiscences about a friend’s sister who, as a result of disastrous marriage, was surrounded with care and sympathy as if she was “an invalid, a convalescent” (218). Saru’s marriage is a means to get away from her mother and her home. The departure of the heroine from the mother is the first step towards autonomy; for the mother is the first pedagogue of the do’s and the don’ts on the woman. Marriage, the promised end in a traditional society, in a feminist fiction becomes only another enclosure that restricts the movement towards autonomy and self-realization. She thinks:

   If you hadn’t fought me so bitterly, if you hadn’t been so 
   against him, perhaps, I would never have married him. And 
   I would not have been here, cringing from the sigh to his 
   hand-writing, hating him and yet pitying him too (96).

Saru yearns for security and emotional attachment, wants her father to support her and her feeling raised against Manu’s brutality. There is a tinge of autobiographical touch also in the depiction of this episode, for Shashi Deshpande was the wife of neuropathologist; Premila Paul makes her observation on this aspect:

   Married to a practising, neuropathologist, Shashi Deshpande 
   presumably has intimate knowledge of the neurotic world 
   of the likes of Manu. But she shows remarkable restraint in 
   the depiction of these scenes and spares readers the critical 
   details.36
Shashi Deshpande in an interview says,

I was astounded. Actually it didn’t start for me, that novel, with the notion of rape, or sexual domination. It started with a couple, the uneasiness or tension between them. And I knew the man was not doing well in his career as the woman was, and I connected the two.\(^{37}\)

It is easy to identify the consequences of the shattering of the male ego. Saru dwells upon this at length in her father’s house and tries to analyse her share of the blame in the disaster that her marriage has been. When asked by her friend Nalu to talk on ‘Medicine as a profession for woman’ to some college students, Saru considers warning the young students. She longs to tell them the rigid rules of tradition according to which;

A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. If he is an M.A., you should be a B.A.. If he’s 5’ 4” tall you shouldn’t be more that 5’ 3” tall. If he is earning five hundred rupees, you should never earn more than four hundred and ninety-nine rupees. That’s the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage. Don’t ever try to reverse the doctor-nurse, executive-secretary, principal-teacher role. It can be traumatic, disastrous. And I, assure you, it is not worth it. He’ll suffer, you’ll suffer and so will the children. Women’s magazines will tell you that a marriage should be an equal partnership. That’s nonsense. Rubbish. No partnership can ever be equal. It will always be unequal, but take care that’s unequal in favour of your husband. If the scales tilt in your favour, god help you, both of you. \(^{137}\)

Saru’s bitter realization is that woman must necessarily remain a step behind. Surprisingly enough. John Ruskin holds a similar view:

A man ought to know any language or science he learns, thoroughly: while a woman ought to know the same language or science only so far as may enable her to sympathize in her husband’s pleasures, and in those of his best friends.\(^{39}\)
Down the memory lane of extra marital relationship there is Padmakan, who had been Saru’s classmate/master in the medical college. Now he has become a medical practitioner. Padmakan forces to have more deeper relationship with Saru, but after a few incidents. She dissuades him from doing so as she wants bring an end to their relationship. This relationship is neither soothing nor comforting to her. She becomes clear eyed with no illusions left about lover or romance, says she:

And I? Now, I know it was not just the consequences I feared and hated, but the things itself. What had I imagined? Love? Romance? Both. I knew too well, were illusions, and not relevant to my life anyway. And this code word of our age is neither love nor romance, but sex. Fulfillment and happiness came, not through love alone, but sex. And for me sex was now a dirty word. (133).

Saru’s sexuality is killed with marital rape she sees herself as nothing but “dark, dump, smelly hole.” The regular violation of her body by the man she once loved and the hypocrisy maintained by him makes Saru dislike everything about him. With her faith in love and marriage shattered, Saru grows to detest the very act of sex. Critics like R. Mala and Charu Chandra Mishra have questioned Saru’s character on the basis of her friendship with Boozie and Padma. But “Saru’s affair with Boozie (her boss) and Padmakar Rao (her college mate) seem temporary for her unfulfilled marital life”.39 Commenting on Saru’s relationship with the two men Kamini Denesh says:

In The Dark Holds No Terrors also there are other men but the relationship gives no solace. On the other hand, the homosexual Boozie and the frustrated Padma bring to Saru the disillusioning realisation that there can be no happiness of fulfillment in these relationships. They cannot be an escape route from the tension of married life. The woman seeking a crutch has, finally to fall back on herself.40

Saru’s meeting with her two childhood friends Smitha and Nalu aims at presenting a contrast in the lives of three women, Saru, Smitha and Nalu. Smitha, by virtue of her submissive and surrendering instinct,
Saru comments her: “There always time to do all things ‘He’ wants to do, you just tag on to him and drift, a small boat towed by larger ship” (117). Another option left for a woman to exist in Indian society is spinsterhood, but too is not a primrose path; Saru observes that the bitterness that has creeped into the idea of the acquisition of dignity and confidence, is flaunted; Saru does not approve of this option and thinks that spinster hood has done little good to Nalu. Trying to analyse the change in Nalu, Saru thinks that it would be foolish to “say that she (Nalu) is bitter because she never married, never bore a child. But that would be as stupid as calling me fulfilled because I got married and I have borne two children’ (121).

Through the lives of Smitha and Nalu, Saru is able to contrast the joys and sorrows of a wife and mother and that of a spinster. She finds that it is difficult to draw conclusions and to say who is happier and more fulfilled. As Betty Friedan observes:

Of the growing thousands of women currently getting private psychiatric help in the United States, the married ones were reported dissatisfied with their marriages, the unmarried ones suffering from anxiety and, finally depression.

She, however, continues,

Strangely, a number of psychiatrists stated that, in their experience unmarried women patients were happier than married ones.41

Saru has contempt for the traditional concept according to which the sole purpose of a woman’s existence is to please her husband. “Everything in a girls life... was shaped to that single purpose of pleasing a male” (163). She remembers Mai Kaki’s advise to keep her hands soft and smooth, so that her, “husband will never let go of them” (163). But Saru’s husband has let go of her hands because Saru has failed to please him.

P. Ramamoorthi writes:

Woman, in order to achieve her freedom, seeks marriage as an alternative to the bondage created by the parental family. She resents the role of a daughter and looks forward to the
role of wife with the hope that her new role will help in winning their freedom.\textsuperscript{42}

Shashi Deshpande, very dexterously, keeps herself away from two ideologies that a woman finds fulfillment in marriage, and that spinsterettes are destined to lead a happy married life,—rather she follows the path of the golden mean. Saru starts hating the man-woman relationship which is based on attraction and need and not love:

Love... how she scorned the word now. There was no such thing between man and woman. There was only a need which both fought against, futilely... turning into the thing they called “love”. It’s only a word she thought. Take away the word, the idea, and the concept will wither away. (79)

Another instance is provided by Saru’s classmate Padmakar who tells her about his wife,

She cannot talk about anything but servants and children, and prices... She never has her food until I go and have mine, she cooks just what I like and she never calls me by my name (32).

There is a contrast between Manu’s and Padmakar’s thoughts. An Indian woman has to perform many roles at a time. Promilla Kapur thinks that the husband is mainly responsible for the tension:

They like wives take up jobs but dislike them to change at all as far as their attitude towards their roles and statuses at home is concerned and dislike their traditional responsibilities being neglected which results from their pre-occupation with out-of-home vocation. Their attitude towards their wives being employed is found to be ambivalent.\textsuperscript{43}

Saru’s long hours of introspection into her marriage makes her realize that her professional success had killed Manu’s spirit; it has liberated her from the feeling of guilt that she has made Manu what he is. She decides that she would not endure any more humiliation because of Manu’s failure and her success. Critics like R. Mala who interpret extra-marital relationship as a part of feminism say that the sexuality repressed Deshpande’s women,
“strives for expression through sexual relationship or affairs with men other than their husbands. Saru’s affair with Boozie (her Boss) and Padmakar Rao (her college-mate) seems temporary substitute for her unfulfilled marital life.”

If the novel is read between the lines, the theory of extra marital relation is outright rejected, for Saru, the protagonist does not develop sexual relationship either with Boozie or with Padmakar; this frees her from the charge of infidelity also; further she loses interest in sex for it is a dirty world for her. R. Mala’s presumption that an educated woman, who tries to assert herself as an individual, must necessarily be promiscuous is typical of thinking of most of the Indians.

While staying at her parents home she regrets for having come to her parents house, as she is reminded of her children, her practice, and her patients. In all these memories her husband doesn’t figure at all. Her visit to her father’s house is a kind of escape from the sadist husband. After reliving memories of her brother’s death when she was a child, Saru is now able to confront deeper problems.

The final solace comes to Saru from her father’s advice to obliterate from her memory-slate the guilt of fratricide in connection with Dhruva’s death, and further to pay her adversaries in the same coin; the final ideology preached to her is that ‘sweet are the uses of adversity’; all this results into the realization that meaningful life can be found not only in solitude, but in mutual inter-dependence also; the perfect partnership between her father and Madhav is a pattern where they make no demands on each other. “It’s a partnership, wordless, uncomplaining and perfect. A tacit understanding.” As all good partnership should be. At a point, Saru admits,

“I have been clinging to the tenuous shadow of a marriage whose substance has long since disintegrated because “I have been afraid of proving my mother right” (220).

Sarу’s father suggests her;

Give him a chance, Saru. Stay, and meet him. Talk to him. Let him know from you what’s wrong. Tell him all that you
told me... ‘Don’t turn your back on things again. Turn round and look at them. Meet him (216).

Though Saru thinks that Manu is responsible for shattering her dream of happiness in marriage and though she wants to be free from her terrifying loveless trap. She feels guilty of her share in the breaking off of the marriage bond. It is Madhav who makes her realize the reality when he says, “I can’t spoil my life because of that boy. It’s my life, after all” (208).

The instinct of motherhood torments her heart, when she broods over the sullen solitude of her daughter Renu, and she hereinafter starts thinking of going back to her home, which her obstinacy had made her to forsake and desert. She understand, “Escapism is no solution; a permanent solution has to come from within.”

The wisdom of matrimony down upon Saru, as depicted in the last pages of the novel, that she should not become a Jesus to enwrap the guilt of others and bear the burden of cross in taking it to Golgotha; that the confidence restoring essence of marriage is mutual regard and reciprocal understanding; with the resurrection of this might, she prepares herself to see Manu, her ‘Pilot face to face’.

Her parent’s lived like strangers under one roof and were destined to what Thomas Hardy terms ‘state familiarity’ in case of Michael Henchard and Susan. Later her father regrets this lack of communication in their marriage and confesses that silence had become a habit for them. Deshpande, through this novel brings to light the fact that marriage is the only option in a girl’s life. The issue of woman being professionally superior to the husband, goes against the traditional roles set by matrimony. Though the Saru-Manu relationship, Deshpande raises the question of marital rape, which the Indian tradition does not recognize. She shows that rape within marriage becomes the ultimate means by which the husband subjugates his wife.

The reader is made aware of the fact that in the world created by Shashi Deshpande, coition becomes a certain type of rape which she terms ‘marital rape’, in the likelihood of one sided love affair, an Indian
marriage becomes one sided sex affair; as the wife has no will of her own, she is seldom given to any pleasure whatsoever in the game of love; such a married life, on the clinical side is prone to resulting into hysteria, cancer or tuberculosis, the prime diseases that consume an average Indian woman's life. So far as Roots and Shadows is concerned, the novelist furnishes a valuable advice that a woman should be of secretive nature so far as marriage and sex are concerned, for in a conservative Indian society sex is still a taboo, and a woman, if she talks about such things, is branded as shameless one; the view points of Indu and Mini about marriage, remind the reader of two sisters’ view i.e. of Ursula and Gudrum in D.H. Lawrence’s Women in Love.

It is in this novel that marriage at three levels has been explored and analysed, the first couple comprises Jayant and Indu, and reveals the hollowness of love marriage, dealing side by side the extra marital relations of Indu and Naren, her cousin; the second pair is strange, for Mini’s problems of marriage are discussed in detail, but the name of her husband is not disclosed; similar is the case with the third wherein there is the mariarch Akka, but her husband occupies some terra incognita. The marriage of Mini, Indu’s, the protagonist’s cousin sets the ball of action rolling in connection with the plot structure of the novel Roots and Shadows; the rituals are performed in the ancestral home after a span of eleven years; this period has elapsed, since Indu left her native land in order to marry Jayant, the man of her choice against the wishes of the entire family especially the old matriarch Akka.

Shashi Deshpande in the present novel, highlights the problem of marriage faced my middle-class people in finding suitable grooms for their daughters. This problem is well illustrated through the character of Padmini. Mini’s father, Anant, faces a financial crisis. Anant was aware that with his weak financial position, he won’t be able to get his daughter married. Finally he agrees to marry Mini to a distant relative of Akka as she promises to pay for Mini’s wedding. Mini, too, brought up in a traditional way, does not like to remain a burden on her parents and she prefers to go her house thus relieving the family of her burden.
In India, a girl’s marriage is consummated only after satiating the demands of the groom and his parents. Vrinda Nabar writes about the dowry system of India,

The bride’s father gives according to his means, frequently out of proportion to them, borrowing of necessary, since he believes that his daughter’s prestige and happiness are at stake. Ironically, no one who is party to such a transaction appears to wonder what happiness measured in these terms implies, or whether it exits at all, or is worth acquiring at that price?46

The tragic irony is that even in the modern age, Indian girls echo the same sentiment where, “it was marriage that mattered not the man.”47 The line of sacrifices in a woman’s life begin with marriage. Indu who has married against the wishes of the family is surprised to hear about Mini’s acceptance to the proposal in spite of the fact that the boy had “heavy, coarse features and crude mannerism” (3). Indu questions Mini if she does not consider it a point to think of marriage. Mini replies, “why should I think of it? I’m past twenty four. I have to get married. What else is there to think about? (124)

Marriage makes a girl so dependent (106) and afraid of spinsterhood, which in Indian society brings constant humiliation. Mini cries and complains to Indu,

“How old are you? And not married yet? What a pity! I’m tired, Indu. I don’t care what kind of a man he is. Once we are married, and he became my husband, none of his flaws will matter.” (126) A husband is husband. “A definite article. Permanent. Not only for now, but for ever. To be accepted. (126-27)

Deshpande’s aim in presenting the character of Indu, is to unveil the bitter facts and experiences of a middle class family, alongwith the problems faced by every girl in the contemporary social environment, and an unconditional surrender at the altar of marriage, as the only refuge; that is why Mini agrees to marry even the dreadful and diabolical man, and yet she considers herself to be happy, for she is “fulfilling her destiny”
(4). Indu asks her about her choice of marriage. Mini’s passive acceptance shocks her. Mini says, “What choice do I have Indu? ... of course I’m marrying him because there’s nothing else I can do (125).

Marriage in the traditional Indian society, only means fear, agony and frustration on the girls side. Indu learns from Mini that nothing could endure except compromise and that she has to learn to be content with her lot.

Vrinda Nabar comments:

Moreover, even if we conclude, 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.48

The three fold guilt, that of being born a girl of and the fear of spinsterhood, supplemented with the guilt of being a constant burden upon her family torments the psyche of Mini, whose reply to Indu sums up the trauma faced by most Indian girls on the threshold of marriage:

Any man, Indu? Yes, any man. Any man who says ‘yes’. You don’t know what it has been like. Watching Kaka and Hemant and even Madhav-Kaka running around after eligible man. And then, sending horoscope and having it come back with a message, “it does not match”. And if the horoscopes matched, there was the meeting to be arranged. And mother and Atya slogging in the kitchen the whole day. And all those people coming...and staring and asking all kinds of questions. And if we heard they were old fashioned people, I would dress up in an old fashioned manner and they would say. ‘She’s not modern enough’. And if I dressed up well because some one said the boy wanted a smart wife, they would say ‘She is too fashionable for us’. Or too short, Or too tall, or too dark, Or too something. “And Kaka trying to laugh and talk to those people, while his eyes looked so... anxious. And I, feeling like as if I had committed a great crime by being born a girl. To make your parents look like that...And, then, they would say, someone else in the family wants to see the
girl. So we would have to go through it all over again. And finally, if everything was fine, there was the dowry. (126)

By making Mini decide to marry such a man, Shashi Deshpande lets the volcano of marriage eject the lava of social problems as an evil practice for right from the beginning to the end it is a history of woman’s suppression, a long drawn out drama of negotiation in which she feels uncertain, is dragged all along the thrashing floor of humiliation till she blurts our helplessly, “Yes”, whether the man is a rake or an idiot or an uncultured poor. Marriage is a deal in which the poor woman is literally bracketed with an animal, for she cannot exercise her reasoning or intelligence and expresses her genuine individual concerns. Deshpande tries to speak her own views and is at her best when she dwells upon this subject:

Million of girls have asked this question millions of times in this country. Surely it was time they stopped asking it. (125)

Marriage, which is considered a tie of two souls, is thus degraded to an extent that it becomes nothing but a ritual, involving no responsibility, sharing and understanding of two minds. Thus, the society influences woman, imposes the burden of marriage and leaves her with no choice. Deshpande shows the traditions according to which the average Indian girl is brought up—her sole aim to get married but whose long wait to achieve it becomes a torturous experience. Through the example of Mini, Deshpande raises the issue of arranged marriage—the obvious absence of sentiment or feeling in a union which sanctified the life long partnership of man and woman. Indu is moved enough to comment:

Behind the facade of romanticism, sentiment and tradition, what was marriage after all, but two people brought together after cold-blooded bargaining to meet, mate and reproduce so that the generation might continue? (3)

In the sociological ken of Shashi Deshpande, the only solace coming to Indian parents, is the moment, when their daughter crosses the threshold of her native land toward, an unknown voyage in a boat, the oar of which is to be turned by a man in the direction which he pleases; this makes Indu notice the change in Mini’s mother and her attitude after the settlement
of Mini’s marriage. It is on the dreamy vantage ground of material prosperity that is to brought to his daughter that Anant turns down Indu’s proposal of looking for another suitable match for Mini, as he remarks:

      May b the boy is a little ugly, may be a little stupid (...) but everything else is fine. The family is good, it’s known to us, they have money, she’ll be quite comfortable. (51)

Mini’s mother and other relations do not consider the easy available Naren a suitable match for their daughter. Discussing Naren’s proposal to marry Mini, Indu asks Kaki if he is a right man for Mini. Kaka says,

      Right man, right man ... who can guarantee who’s the right man? After all, we can do only so much. The rest depends on the girl’s luck. (131)

Indu is shocked by the reply of Mini who does not want to think of her marriage. For everyone the settlement of marriage of a girl is a big responsibility and enough problematic as Indu’s Madhav Kaka states;

      Marriage itself is a difficult enough business. For two people to merge into one identity, it is...almost an impossibility. But given certain things in common...language, customs, rituals, backgrounds... all this makes it easier. ‘2+2 makes 4 (98).

As a viable contrast to Mini, the rebellious Indu, possessed with the desire of seeking the ‘untravelled world, whose margin fades’ and where none can impose his will upon her, she marries Jayant, a man of different caste but of her own choice and leaves her parental home. In her very first meeting with Jayant, she is swept off her feet. He gives her a feeling of solidity and certainly. She hopes that her marriage with Jayant would enables her to realise the need “to belong”, to be bound with relationship. She realises the need, “to belong, to be wanted, needed, loved, desired admired...how many traps there are! And I full into all of them.” The most primary thing for her is to own the freedom to express her true self to the world. But she painfully realises that she has walked into just another trap. She does not heed the warning of Akka, who has no good opinion of inter-caste marriage,
Such marriages never work. Different castes, different languages... it's all right for a while (68).

Indu leaves for ancestral house and enters into another to be independent and complete but very soon she realizes that the apple has a rotten pulp. She felt that she had been deceived and made to hide her feelings “as if they were bits of garbage”. (38) Her marriage with Jayant suppresses her femininity and her human demands. She is physically and spiritually dissatisfied with her husband who takes her for granted and expects her “to submit”. Her love marriage degenerates into a mere psychological affair and makes her feel that she has polluted her body’s sanctity.

Women like Indu can neither express themselves nor choose for themselves. In silence, Indu pines for love-almost frantically, and broods over her destiny; she could not understand that beggars cannot be choosers and the irony of her experience has revealed to her that she has perfectly known ‘love’s sad satiety. She finds that she has relinquished her identity by surrendering before Jayant’s masculinity—by becoming his wife. Willingly she yields to the demands of marriage and moulds herself upon the dictates of her husband.

Indu plays the role of an ideal housewife, but the role of a wife restricts, rather circumscribes, her self-development—firstly by taking away her freedom of thought and expression, and secondly by denying her the scope of giving free play to her artistic potential. She cannot unburden herself, and her feminine instinct is curbed and suppressed. Despite all these, she is reluctant to admit failure and drags on with her marital life, which only imprisons her true self. Thus, the independent, intelligent, logical, thoughtful and rational reformer of Indian womanhood, Indu is metamorphosed as one of those archetype submissive Indian women whose identity is only an extension of her husband’s. Indu who had laughed at the woman of her family calling them, martyrs, heroines or just stupid fools? But she herself starts adopting their ways bit by bit to avoid conflict in her marriage. Indu realises marriage as,

It’s a trap... that’s what marriage is. A trap? Or a cage?... a cage with two trapped animals glaring hatred at each
other...isn’t so wrong after all. And it’s not a joke, but a tragedy. But what animal would cage itself? (60-61)

She realises,

And I was so proud of my logical and rational thinking. But there, my trap was waiting for me after all. (84)

Marriage has taught her that ‘all that glitters is not gold’, that deception, pretension, hypocrisy are the milestones in matrimonial path specially when the so called westernized Jayant also behaves in no other way than the other conservative husbands do; now she realizes the shameful ‘mote in the eye’ of total commitment:

It shocks him to find passion in a woman. It puts him off. When I’m like that, he turns away from me I have learnt my lesson now. And so I pretend. I’m passive. And unresponsive (83).

In Islam marriage acts as an outlet for sexual needs and regulate it so one does not become a slave to his/her desire.

(...) love leads to the certainty of marriage. But marriage invariably takes you back to the world of women, of tring to please, of the fear of not-pleasing, of surrender, of self-abnegation. 49

Indu realises the futility of a hypocritical life;

And I... I had watched them and found it to be true. There had to be, if not the substance, at least the shadow of submission. But still I had laughed at them and sworn I would never pretend to be what I was not. (158)

As a member of subordinate sex, women are characterized by obedience and submission, and under male dominance they have to develop,

a tendency to prevail by passive means. 50

She was “afraid of failure” she wanted to show to the family and the world her success and so she had put on the mask of an obedient and subservient wife to be sacrificed on the altar of Hymen:
And so I went on lying, even to myself, compromising, shedding bits of myself along the way. (159).

She arrives at a realistic understanding of love as a physical instinct and biological necessity:

The sexual instinct...that’s true. The maternal instinct...that’s true too. Self interest, self-love...they’re the basic truths (158).

She discards the existence of love,

It’s a big fraud, a hoax, that’s what it is. They tell you it’s the greatest thing the only thing in life. Ann you believe in them and fall into the trap...(157).

Indu wants to bid adieu to her monotonous job but her husband, Jayant does not approve of this idea. The temperaments of the husband and the wife are diametrically opposite to each other. One is sympathetic to the ills of the society, the ‘system’ whereas the other is nonchalant. Despite these temperamental differences, Indu is quite, submissive. She silently went back to her work, though hating it and hating herself for it.

Indu is hedged in, incarcerated, unable to “go on” through the ordeal of life, “feeling trapped” to and seeing herself “endlessly chained” (18) in the long dusty road that lay ahead of her. When she receives Akka’s summons she heaves a sigh of relief:

It had been a welcome reprieve. A change to get away. To avoid thinking about what was happening to me...To Jayant and me...and our life together (18).

Instead, it is Indu who has to cater to the needs of his inner urges and drives:

But my marriage had taught me this too. I had found in myself an immense capacity for deception (38).

Indu, in spite of her marriage with a man of her own choice, faces problems of a different nature. She seeks, through her marriage, a room of her own and autonomy. But the role of a wife restricts her self-development.

A comparison can be drawn between Indu’s husband Jayant and Asagai, the male chauvinist in the Afro-American writer Loraine Hansberry’s
play *A Hasin in the Sun*. This is only to show that the attitude of the male
towards the woman remains the same throughout the world. However
forward they may be in other matters, their treatment of woman is same.
Early in the play, Beneatha, Asagai’s girl friend, has this exchange with
Asagai who is forcing her to marry him:

Beneatha: You never understood that there is more than one kind
of feeling which can exist between a man and a
woman—or, at least there should be.

Asagai: (Shaking his head negatively but gently) No. Between
a man and a woman there need be only one kind of
feeling. I have that for you.

Beneatha: I know—and by itself—it won’t do. I can find that any
where.

Asagai: For a woman it should be enough.

Even though women are meek, submissive and uncomplaining, it is difficult
for men to obliterate the feminine existence, for their silence is more
eloquent than the barbed tongue.

Indu’s predicament also is representative of the larger predicament
of women in contemporary India where the new socio-economic forces
have shaken old cultural modes. This breaking up of the joint family has
affected relationship at various levels, especially relationship at husband-
wife level. In the old family pattern, as Deshpande puts it, “the two met
only briefly in the darkness of night.” So there hardly was any occasion
for conflict. But with husband and wife constantly thrown together in the
present pattern and with the wife sharing in many of responsibilities which
were earlier supposed to be only his, there have arisen the problems of
incompatibility and maladjustment and expectations and despair.

Indu eventually finds that she is a different from the women who
circumambulate the Tulsi plant and who believe that a woman’s good
fortune lies in dying before her husband. As P. Bhatnagar comments:
It baffled her to realize that she who considered herself to be so independent, so intelligent, so clever, she who had been so proud of her logical and rational thinking; she who had been all set to reform Indian womanhood had fallen into the trap waiting for her.52

Jayant’s views are coloured by the age-old traditions, which had defined woman, as a means to fulfil man’s needs and not as a human being with human own sexual needs. Jayant also resents any display of passion on her part. He expects his wife to be demure and coy, without shedding her inhibitions even in the privacy of their bedroom. This is evident from what Indu narrates:

Jayant, so passionate, so ready, sitting up suddenly and saying, ‘No, not now’, when I had taken the initiative.(83)

Indu’s role is enough to indicate that a woman’s passivity and suppression of emotions should not be taken for granted by a man so as to empower him with ignoring her sexuality. Juxtaposed to Indu is Saru of *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, who develops an aversion to the sexual act because of marital rape. While Saru silently bears the physical tortures and humiliation, Indu silently crushes her passion and desire to please Jayant. The masculine world recedes in the background. Her stay away from Jayant gives her the opportunity to analyze her marriage from a distant objectivity. She realizes that in loving Jayant and pleasing him she had become self-denying traditional wife she always detested. Her realization of the problem in her marriage makes her confide in her cousin. The easy compatibility between them makes her take a daring step in surrendering herself to him. The magnetism of amorous attraction exercises equal force on both the poles comprising Indu and Naren. Naren’s love for music and his ability to lose himself in it makes Indu realizes that there was nothing shameful in need for love, ‘If music be the food of love, play on’. As Naren says “music fills me ... there is no more ‘I’”.

Indu couldn’t establish herself emotionally with Jayant as Jayant is shocked by Indu’s passion and interest in sex. She confesses to Naren;
...And now, when you tried to kiss me, I thought...this is Jayant. So that’s all I am, Naren. Not a pure women. Not a too faithful wife. But an anachronism. A woman who loves her husband too much. Too passionately. And is ashamed of it. (83)

Na tadrisheem preetimupaiti nari
Vichitrashayyam shaayita api kamam
Yatha hi doorvadi vikirna bhumau
Prayati Saukhyam parakanta sangat.53

(A woman does not desire that pleasure even sleeping in the couch of a Cupid like husband as she desires delight, having the companionship of someone else, as spouse, on the pebled and grassy land).

Female sexuality is feared as a threat which undermines a woman’s own honour and that of her family. Religious tenets and cultural ethics have always emphasized the child-bearing function of woman and condemned her pursuit of sexual pleasure. Woman is, therefore, enforced to be sexually passive and submissive even towards her own spouse and as a quester for sexual satisfaction, woman is not ethically accepted.

When she stays away from Jayant in her ancestral home, feels;

...You want touch and feel, to be touched and felt; finally, inhabited. You turn round to meet the warmth, the hardness, the intimate contact of another body. Then you realise there’s only you. And you feel cold and alone and bereft. (148).

Waking up early in the morning she goes to Naren,

...I found in myself a crystal clarity of vision. So that every thing I saw was highlighted as if I was watching through the focussing lens of a camera. Each minute detail was picked out for me with precision and then magnified a hundred, a thousand times. (151)

She in fact revels in the act with wild abondon and deliberately savours the memory of it, refusing to wipe it out of her mind. She thinks,
I can go back and lie on my bed, I thought, and it will be like erasing the intervening period and what happened between Naren and me. But deliberately went to my bed and began folding the covers. I don’t need to erase anything I have done, I told myself in a fit of bravado (152).

The severity of critics does not permit the bliss of assertion, even to an intelligent woman like Indu, as she stoops too low to conquer, but in vain. In the words of P. Ramamoorthy;

This shed a brilliant light on Indu’s awareness of her autonomy and her realization that she is a being, and not a dependent on Jayant. The novel gains its feminist stance in Indu’s exploration into herself but it also moves beyond the boundaries of feminism into a perception of the very predicament of human existence.54

But P. Bhatnagar has a totally different perspective. In fact what Indu has committed is never to be accepted in a traditional family set up. She says,

Indu’s casual and matter-of-fact attitude to what she had done, is shocking. Have over morals really gone so low that woman commit this sin for nothing, just to prove that they do not lack courage? Is this really representative of modern Indian woman?55

Attacking such allegations Y.S. Sunita Reddy remarks;

Perhaps this is Deshpande’s answer to the double standards practised by our society where only men are allowed to take sexual liberties.56

The basis of extra marital relationship in the novel Roots and Shadow is that, Indu develops a discontentment against her traditional married life with Jayant, who stood for the ideal that sexual passion is not a matter of exhibition for a woman; this excessive suppression of emotions instincts and feelings of sexuality erupts like a volcano when Indu decides to develop an extra marital relation with Naren, towards whom she is not only attracted, but to some extends hypnotised in such a way as to surrender her body, mind and soul to that newly arrived person in her life. Similarly, like
Candida of Bernald Shaw, she realises that Jayant also might be feeling the agony of separation from his wife, and hence, like an Indian benevolent wife, she decides to share the experiences of prodigal son coming back to his native land and home. In her own words, Indu says:

Apart from wronging Jayant? Wronging Jayant? I winced at the thought. But had I not wronged Jayant even before this? By pretending, by giving him a spurious coin instead of the genuine kind? I had cheated him of my true self. That, I thought, is dishonourable, dishonest, much more than this, what I have done with Naren. (171)

Words like ‘love’ have got no meaning to her. In other words, to her there is no such thing as love in real life though that exists in books and movies. To her, the sexual instinct...it is true. Indu now understands that her love is not a restricting but a uniting bond which shall lead her to lose herself to Jayant, so that their lives shall be full of harmony and peace. To her emotions were of most importance in any relationship and her mind being pre-occupied with Jayant, she was unable to develop any such feelings for Naren. She realizes that she has to achieve an understanding with Jayant. Naren introduces her and her own need to be free, free to live without pretence and on her own terms. Eventually she decides to return to Jayant with a view to be honest and to herself. Thus, a changed Indu not ashamed of her love and sexuality but proud of it, meets Jayant with a challenge for him to accept her. She states,

Nevertheless I knew I would not tell Jayant about Naren and me. For that was not important. That had nothing to do with the two of us and our life together. (187)

As a result of this, instead of leaving Jayant, she goes back to him with the vain hope that things will change. Jayant after sometime accepts the change in Indu with renewed respect. Her thoughts;

...There is an ease in our relationship that was not there before. If my feelings have cooled down to some extend (...) the fever is no longer there (...) I have gained something else in return. I no longer fight my need of him. I am ashamed of it. I know it does not make me less a human being. (14)
To Indu the concept of a successful marriage is a hoax, and she insists that nothing should be judged. A perfect understanding is based on, “Don’t judge me. Don’t criticise me. Just appreciate me. See only my virtues, not my vices. My strengths, not my weaknesses. (115 Thus, Indu’s realization and assertion of her needs makes the novel end on a clear note of affirmation, to which Jayant greatly contributes. His recognition of her true self helps Indu hope for a better chance of understanding and happiness in marriage.

The evils of child-marriages and of matrimony as prison are to be traced out in the sufferings of Akka, who is so much scared of sexual encounter with a man old enough to be her father asks mother-in-law to keep her locked in a room rather than to be sent to her husband’s chamber. Her plight is that she is prone to mental shocks resulting into a number of miscarriages for which she is again and again scolded by her mother-in-law. The tortures inflicted upon daughters-in-law by mothers-in-law are not too uncommon to Indian readers.

The novelist condemns the two headed ideology in marriage; the wife must be monogamous and her husband is always deified; on the other hand a man is allowed an immeasurably large together for his loitering as Akka’s husband keeps in number of mistresses and the poor wife has no right to object to it. Narmada-Atya tells Indu “He had a weakness for woman. How could a frightened child satisfy him? He always had mistresses.(70) As Indian tradition too had denied a woman any right over her body and made her a victim of marital rape. As a result of such inhuman conditions, Akka begins to view sex as a punishment. Sunita Reddy opines that,

Sex as a punishment was perhaps, how it was viewed by such child brides who nevertheless did not raise any banner of revolt but on the other hand continued to suffer and helped to perpetuate such oppression. 57

That the arranged marriages fail to do any justice to womankind, and that the norms for men are different from those that are for women, because, in case of incompatibility the man enjoys the option of finding another woman to satisfy his desires, but a woman has no such option and she
is destined to lead a sexless married life devoid of love as a cementing force, has been asserted by Shashi Deshpande vehemently through the depiction of Akka’s marriage and subsequent matrimonial life; the identical plight of mistresses and concubines is also stressed through Narmada’s narration that the mistress, who had given the peak years of her life to Naren, is, like some blighted star, doomed to face humiliation. As Neena Arora remarks,

Man considers it as normal behaviour to satisfy his desires at both the emotional and the physical levels outside marriage, while it is ruthlessly condemned as adultery in case a woman indulges in it even though accidentally the slightest hint of any deviation on her part which may not even involve sex, man turns violent and hostile towards his wife and starts prosecuting her. This condemnation is dictated by man’s interest in preserving his property rather than by any moral consideration.\textsuperscript{58}

Thus, Shashi Deshpande, with a Dickensian instinct of social historiographer and reformer, explores the cosmos, the psyche, the sociological complications, the synthesis of emotions, feelings and ideologies; in addition to which she analyses the complications arising out of arranged or love marriages; wherein the female heart-beat has been ignored, be it in her family in gender discrimination, her affairs pre-marital, marital or extra marital relationships; the gratification of sexuality, perversity, marital rape, sexless living as strangers under a single roof; the plights of unmatched couple, curse of widowhood, the non explicit existence disturbed by the presence of concubines—all these form sum and substance of the novels—\textit{The Dark Holds no Terrors} and \textit{Roots and Shadows}. The arousal and reminder of female sexuality is provided by Jaya’s new acquaintance with Kamat, whose gift of casual physical contact revives desire in Jaya.

It was not for nothing that Sahitya Akademi award was conferred upon Shashi Deshpande for her novel \textit{That Long Silence}, which tells the story of an Indian housewife, who remained an Indian housewife through out the entire life and could utter not even a simple word of discontent or content; her ‘native hue of resolution’ to speak, marks the end of the
novel. Further, the novelist presents Jaya, who is emblematic of the Feministic voice:

A free and autonomous being like all creators—(a woman) finds herself living in a world which men compel her to assume the status of the other.”

*That Long Silence,* Shashi Deshpande’s most critically acclaimed novel is about the long silence that engulfs the marriage of Jaya and Mohan. Mohan’s demand of an English speaking wife makes him tie the knot with Jaya, a well educated girl. Jaya in turn marries Mohan out of defiance, as her mother disapproved of him. She lives with him at different places till he went away from her to clear himself of the charge of business malpractice. She bore him two children and the third was aborted. In spite of Mohan’s expectations he had a strong traditional background where he had grown up seeing his mother silently submit to every erratic demand of his father. With the roles of submissive wife and domineering husband deeply ingrained in his mind, he enters into matrimony with Jaya. The disparity in their background leads to a clash of expectations. She was lonely as her husband could not understand her feelings; as a result of which she was torn from within. Deshpande uses a beautiful image to describe Jaya’s married life:

A pair of bullocks yoked together...A man and a woman married for seventeen years. A couple with two children... But the reality was only this. We were only two persons. A man...A Woman.

The image of the beasts performing the duty mechanically undermines the husband-wife relationship, who are supposed to be united in marriage for love and not for leading to mechanical life terminating in mutual haterd and distrust. The first conflict in their marriage takes place when Jaya being pregnant asked Mohan to cook. The male chauvinistic echo of Mohan does not permit it as he tries to laugh at this Jaya responds the same as he did. Mohan shocked at his display of anger and outbursts, “How could you? I never thought my wife could say such things to me. You’re my wife (...)”.
Jaya resents the role assigned to a wife in our country, when she is called upon to stay at home, look after the babies and keep out the rest of the world. She could not continue her writing as Mohan discouraged her; as the scriptural instinct in her was not allowed to come out, she formed herself in acute mental tension and blamed her husband for all this, because it did not matter to Mohan she ‘had written a good story, a story about a couple, a man who could not reach out to his wife except through her body’ (44). She did not take the risk of annoying Mohan lest that should break her marriage. The fear of unsuccessful married life prompts Jaya to abandon self-revelatory and self-satisfying writing, for her husband does not like that the dirty linens of married life should be washed in public. This resumes Jaya’s consciousness and responsibilities as wife and mother. Theirs was a loveless married life, which caused the wife and the husband to drift away from each other. Jaya complains bitterly of her failure:

I’ll tell you what’s wrong. I’ve failed him. He expected something from me, from his wife, and I’ve failed him. All these years I thought I was Mohan’s wife; now he tells me I was never that, not really. What am I going to do? What shall I do if he doesn’t come back? (185).

The woman and author in Jaya was crushed by Mohan that she reached the threshold of frigidity, as he neither loved her nor did he provide her with encouragement whatsoever; this leads to the finding that ‘sensual memories are the coldest’.

Those emotions and responses seemed to belong to two other people, not to the two of us lying her together. ...In fact, we had never spoken of sex at all. First there’s love, then there’s sex. 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 came we could play them flawlessly, word-perfect (95).
A compulsion of living with Mohan after an abandonment of seven years brings frustration and depression to Jaya, for such an experience is futile. The disgust of living with a man who does not love the woman the way she expects him to do, is a burning problem that educated women face in our contemporary society.

Inhibitions also exist on a more personal level, i.e. in respect of her sexuality “Physical touching is for me a momentous thing” (15) She confesses; it is so for most women, particularly in conservative cultures like the India. He fails to understand that a woman’s sexuality is a complex phenomenon, made up a physical as well as emotional factors. With Mohan it mostly is a “silent, wordless love making” (85) “feeling his heavy, damp body” on hers (95). She certainly fails to be stirred deeply more and more from the mere act of sex. “I could sleep with him too without desire” (97). As one of Sartre’s characters says, ‘it is like drinking oneself without feeling thirsty.’ More or less similar experience has been regarded by T. S. Eliot also when he describes the pointlessness experienced by typist girl in The Waste Land. Thinking over it all, Jaya begins to wonder of there is ever anything like a real emotional involvement between a man and woman, “Love? No, I knew nothing of it” (153), she bluntly confesses. The heroine of The Dark Holds No Terror, Saru, makes a similar unhappy discovery. “Love”...how she scorned the world now. There was no such thing between man and woman. There was only a need which both fought against, futilely (65). Women like Jaya or Saru, who are romantic to start with, become disenchanted later. Years later, she realises

he would have slept with me faithfully twice a week whether I creamed my face or not... Whether I wanted him or not (96).

A woman is expected to be passive and docile in relation to her husband. Ramukaka advises his niece : “Remember, Jaya, the happiness of your husband and home depends entirely on you” (138). Jaya tries hard to fit into this traditional mould. Jaya has two roles to play, the one of wife, and the other of a housewife ; in former, in order to please her husband, she transforms her appearance to suit his idea of a modern woman. She cuts her hair, wears dark glasses and ultimately gets so
completely absorbed into the family fold that from a fiercely independent woman she is transformed into the ‘stereotype of a woman, nervous, incompetent, needing male help and support’ (76) In her latter role of a housewife, she feels that a husband becomes in a traditional atmosphere like a “sheltering tree” (32) Jaya reflects: “After so many years, the words came back to me. A sheltering tree. Without the tree, you’re dangerously unprotected and vulnerable.” (32) She realizes that her anger had shattered him. It had broken the image of a traditional wife which Mohan had in mind. His mother had silently endured the moods of her drunkard husband and slogged to fulfil his irrational demands. This had set in Mohan’s mind the qualities of endurance and sacrifice in a woman. Since then Jaya like a dutiful wife learnt not to annoy him lest it should affect her marriage. For the first time she becomes aware of the role of a wife and its limitations. She blames her parents and their easy life-style, which did not train her to be a perfect wife as she saw in the woman at Mohan’s house. As she feels, “I had learnt to control my anger after that, to hold it on a flesh leash. terrified of his disapproval” (83).

Jaya deliberately accepts her new identity of Mohan’s wife, of Suhasini. The story of the crow and the sparrow becomes an ironical symbol of her life, wherein the weak and the sensitive can be treated with one cruel carelessness by the more successful ones. Hence, Jaya like the sparrow devotes her life to home and children. She adopts a life style which revolves around the needs and wishes of Mohan and her two children. When the monotonous flow of their life is disrupted by Mohan’s malpractice, they send their children Rahul and Rati, for a vocation with some friends. Jaya like an obedient wife follows Mohan to their Dadar flat. She unquestioningly accompanies him for:

“he had assumed I would accompany him had taken for granted my acquiescence in his plans. So had I. Sita following her husband into exile, Savitri dogging Death to reclaim her husband Draupadi, stoically sharing her husband’s travails...” (11)

Her dwindling in silence for several years in accepting her husband’s desire domineering over her brings the clouds of gloom hovering over her head
as idle hours replace her active and busy routine. “There was nothing he needed, so there was nothing for me to do. My own career as a wife was in jeopardy” (24-25). Living along with Mohan in the Dadar flat Jaya reviews the sexual aspect of their marriage and the loss of desire and emotions in her. For her, “sensual memories care the coldest”. They stirred up nothing in her. For her it had become more of a routine or a mechanical process of his love making which ended with Mohan’s question whether he had hurt her and her mechanical reply. “No”. A lack of communication and absence of intimacy mars their relationships and they never discuss their feelings. She proves that,

Subtle indoctrination atrophies woman’s desire to change her position as an object and to exercise her free will. She compromises her stand for she is taught the importance and necessity of stable marriage and family—family as security, as a source of emotional strength.62

At times, she is beset with the fear that something may happen to Mohan,

The thought of living without him had twisted my insides. His death had seemed to me the final catastrophe. The very idea of his dying had made me feel so bereft that tears had flowed effortlessly down my checks. If he had been a little late coming home, I had been sure he was dead. By the time he returned, I had, in my imagination shaped my life to a desolate widowhood (96-97).

Though Jaya represents the urban middle class feminine society exposed to liberal Western ideologies, yet she is not able to liberate herself from the shackles of male chauvinist ideas, which have become the ramifications of her culture clinging to her feet in Indian Waste Land; that is why her aunt Vinitamami, counsels her just before her wedding: ‘Remember, Jaya, a husband is like a sheltering tree. Keep the tree alive and flourishing, even if you have to water it with deceit and lies’ (32). Vanitamami’s long suffering role of a martyred wife prompts Jaya at one time before her marriage to think that, may be, she too had been similarly counseled as a bride.
If your husband has a mistress or two, ignore it. Take up a hobby instead, cats may be, or your sister’s children (32).

In spite of her flippant attitude towards Vanitamami’s advice, however, Jaya proves that she is no different from her. When it comes to the question of a choice between her husband and family, and asserting herself as an independent individual, she chooses the former without hesitation. According to Sarla Palkar, “She perhaps does her role of wife to perfection, but fails as a human being”.

Suman Ahuja observes,

Jaya caught in an emotional, eddy, endeavors to come to terms with her protean roles, while trying, albeit in vain, to rediscover her true self, which is but an ephemera... an unfulfilled wife, a disappointed mother and failed writer.

The essential inquisitiveness of a child is also denied to women like Jaya, as her grandmother discouraged it and was told that no husband could be comfortable with a woman who asked question and retorts. It is ironical that although Jaya now has no question or retorts for Mohan theirs is no comfortable relationship. She marries Mohan not out of choice but out of convenience. She says: “And, if there had been no reason why I should have married Mohan, there had been no reason not to marry him either” (93). Even though the girlhood of Jaya might have been tinged with rainbow shades of romance, the sky changes with the advent of womanhood. In early years of her marriage, Jaya has been encouraged to write by Mohan. He introduces her to editors of various papers and magazines. One of her story has won a prize for its realistic portrayal of Mohan. Yet Mohan assumes that the story portrays their own personal life. She says:

Perhaps, if Mohan had been angry, if he had shouted and raged at me, if he had forbidden me to write, perhaps I would have fought him and gone on. But he had only shown me his hurt. And I had not been able to counter that. (144)

In Indian context, marriage is absolutely a sacrosanct contract and the images of the devoted wife and husband conforming to the concept
of ‘ardhanrishwara’ have been held up as the imminent reality of the relation between the sexes. Jaya, feels “Man and woman—it was then that I realised the deep chasm between the two. They are separated for ever, never more than at the moment of total physical togetherness” (98).

In Indian subcontinent, marriage is something for beyond a mere contract for living, rather it is a continuous and unending process, which sometimes, extends beyond the cycle of life and death even for seven times. Jaya observes of Mohan, of his convictions:

A husband and, wife care for each other, live with each other until they are dead; parents care their children and children in turn look after their parents where they are needed; marriage. “...never end, they cannot—they are a state of being” (127).

This is mainly because of the necessity of conforming to cultural edicts. As a result, marriage seldom corresponds to the personal experience or aspirations of the individuals involved so that the relationship is often like Jaya’s description of her own marriage. “Ours has been a delicately balanced relationship, so much so that we have even snipped off bits of ourselves to keep the scales on an even keel” (7). Though Mohan explains to assure Jaya’s company with him, he never looks into her demands and neither does she communicate anything directly to Mohan and hence, there always remains a gap between husband and wife and silence prevails in the house.

That Long Silence is, a muted and essentially sympathetic treatment of the problems of marital relationships; maintaining a credible balance between the sexes.65

A sort of oikodespotic reality on the domestic, social and psychological levels form the basis of Shashi Despande’s approach to man-woman relationship, as she never idealizes and sublimes love and sex, rather she shows what actually happens in life when a well educated girl with literary sensibilities faces situations, utterly different from her idealistic views. Compelled by the presence of circumstances she has to change her notions about love;
Mohan...I’d said the name to myself after we got married, but it had tasted unfamiliar. The man too—we were married, yet he was a stranger. Intimacy with him had seemed a grotesque indecency. Surely, I’d thought, it was not expected of me, not at once, anyway? We would achieve it gradually, by degree or stages, I’d optimistically reassured myself... whereas for Mohan it had been extremely simple. We were married, we were husband and wife, so everything, according to him, was permissible. He had taken it for granted that I thought the same way. And so perhaps it was only I who had been surprised when intimacy had come, all of a sudden, with the physical link. We had slipped into it with a precipitancy that had taken me unaware. (94-95)

The discontentment derived from loveless marriage precipitates Jaya into the pit of extra-marital relationship with Kamat, a middle-aged lonely intellectual who is not rich or socially significant as Mohan. But he is warm, friendly and companionable. Thus, the lack of communication is replaced by association friendship, and sexual propinquity between Kamat and Jaya, for she is treated by him as an entity on equal level. She is not so much a sexual object as friend to him. “I told him things I’d never been able to speak of, not to Dada, not to Mohan” (153).

It is to Kamat that Jaya talks about the most tragic event in her life; the death of her father who had been so affectionate and encouraging towards her. The memory of that searing experience can still bring tears in her eyes: “Suddenly I had realised I was crying and he was holding me” (156). Yet she understands that it is not a sexual gesture at all, but indicative of that warmth and affection that her father had once given her. It seems that, in case of Jaya analysed under psycho-analytical perspective, she is an example of Electra complex, or seeing her lover through a paternal spectacle. “It had been warm and comforting, like wearing Appa’s coat on a chilly night, like sitting before him on her bike”, she recalls (156).

Physical intimacy with Kamat characterised by a spontaneity and ease which she had never felt with Mohan, “the relation of man to woman
is the most natural of one person to another”, Kamat had once told her (158), and his “gift of casual, physical contact” (15), had amazed her and revived desire in Jaya and reminded her of her sexuality. He compliments her like a lover too. He says, “I prefer clean, spare lines in a human being. You, for example—your name is like your face” (152). Deshpande herself remarked in an interview,

...I did bring Kamat to serve a purpose: to show Jaya the kind of relationship that she could achieve with a man. She gets a kind of companionship with Kamat that she never gets from her husband. Yet that is marriage and this isn’t.66

Thus Kamat is brought in the novel as a foil to Mohan though Jaya’s intimacy with him does not lead to any physical relationship between the two. She walks out on Kamat when she finds him dead as she is aware that society does not acknowledge any relationship between a woman and a man outside marriage, however innocent it may be.

Jaya recalls the life of Mohan’s mother. Her never ending suffering had to be endured in marriage as she had no choice. In a frustrated attempt to free herself to repeated pregnancies, she hit herself and tried to abort yet another unwanted child. In the process she met her painful death coupled with ignomny for she dared to go against tradition by aborting her unborn child. This reminds the reader of what Tiresias says in the section Game of Chess of The Waste Land by T. S. Eliot: ‘What you get married for, if you don’t want children’. Similarly Jaya’s old maid servant Jeeja also experiences a turbulent marriage to a drunkard only to be abandoned for another woman. She has no complain for him. She justified it by saying, ...

...”How could I blame him for marrying again when I couldn’t give him any children” (52). She accepts his second wife and even looks after their son after their death. Their son, Rajaran too beats his wife and Jeeja does not allow Tara, his wife to abuse him as, “he keeps kumkum on your forehead, what is woman without that”? (53).

There is another character, Jaya’s grandmother Ajjji, a widow who takes to an empty room, never to emerge again and another are Mukta and Vanitamami Mukta is Jaya’s neighbour at Dadar flat has become a widow at a young age and lives with her parents and a rebellious daughter. Regarding the rest of her life, Jaya feels that she had unconsciously done
what her family had advised her to do to keep Mohan happy. When Mohan with dwindling confidence seeks Jaya’s support, she fails to sympathise with him as her years of silence had made her indifferent. Feeling cheated, Mohan realizes for the first time that Jaya’s silence does not mean her unstinting support. His accusation that she was indifferent to him, a fact, he notices after seventeen years amuses Jaya. She finally breaks her traditional silence by bursting into a hysterical laughter and Mohan humiliated by her reaction walks out of the house.

It is a sociological factor that when the bond of matrimony comes to the point of breakage, the responsibilities is never one sided; that is why as Jaya recovers, she realizes that Mohan cannot be solely held responsible for their troubled marriage. She begins to accept her own failure in establishing a normal reciprocal relationship with Mohan. During their stay at Dadar flat she thinks:

Even if I could no longer call it love, the emotion that governed my behaviour to him, there was still the habit of being a wife, of sustaining and supporting him, that made cruelty to him impossible. And a habit is something that is infinitely more difficult to get rid of.

Her contemplation of their past life unravels to her, her own role in her suppression. She realizes she agreed to Mohan’s wishes because conforming to social norms was “safe comfortable and unassailable. After Mohan’s going out Jaya realizes, ... “Was it impossible for me to relate to the world without Mohan?” The earlier impulsive Jaya becomes a mature woman. With the “All well” news from Mohan and the arrival of their son Rahul, she finds herself slipping into her marital life again. With a hope to make Mohan understand her and her feelings, Jaya prepares to face life for “life has always to be made possible.” (193)

The above analysis of three novels is sufficient to indicate that sexuality, whether female and male is inevitable for material propinquity; that reciprocal understanding should not be in the form of exhibitionistic verbal jugglery, for the sixth sense of a woman provides her with an ultrasound exploration of each and every nerve of her husband; and that the road leading to saffron robed Hymen’s altar is carpeted with the pink of Aphrodite and yellow of Minerva.
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2 *Holy Qur’an*, 2: 187
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Panchtantra


CHAPTER-II

THEME OF MARRIAGE, SEX AND EXTRA-MARITAL RELATION