CHAPTER II

WOMAN IN THE TRADITIONAL SET UP

The Indian culture which boasts of an ancient civilization was not gender biased in the ancient days but unfortunately it adopted patriarchy with the advent of foreign rulers. During that glorious period women excelled and attained prominence in all fields and also gained reverence. In this connection it may be worthwhile to quote Prof. R. Sathianathaier, who says “The education of women throughout the Vedic age was of a high standard” (44). But it is not imaginary that the male of the house was considered to be the champion of the family line. A generation is traced through the male line and all inheritances are patrilateral. So, the Indian society gives importance only to a male child in rituals as he is considered to carry on the family line. Thus most of the Indian homes uncompromisingly give preference to boys and this system has taken deep roots in the Indian tradition and has caused the outcome of a patrilineal bias that a girl child is a liability and the boy an asset to the family. This practice is being religiously followed as a principle in the Indian custom bound society and it is inextricably linked to the Indian psyche. This system has ultimately resulted in a fallacious convention that a male child is mandatory in a family. According to Manusmriti, a sacred law in Hinduism, the son of a wife married according to the Brāhma rite, if he performs meritorious acts, liberates from sin ten ancestors, ten descendants, and himself as the twenty first. (Chapter 3, 37)

Social constraints on girls have constricted their activities to gender specific roles such as doing household work, looking after the siblings and training their own self to be submissive to others. The attitudes of the parents, the community and the society force girls to feel inferior to boys. They never get any support for self-development and are considered a burden to the family. Parents believe that their prime duty is to find a better life partner...
for their daughters and send them away with their husbands. Parents ruminate on their responsibilities to settle their girls rather than to think of their better life. The girls also feel a sense of discomfort in their own parent’s house after a certain age. The traditional role of woman is to occupy the ‘second class’ citizenship in the society.

The burden of a female child is irksome to the family because her biological condition and her ‘weaker’ physique leading to what is socially structured as ‘feminine’, act as obstacles to the development of her personality. Not only the parents but also the society as a whole is influenced and conditioned against the physical appearance of the girl child and consider her a social and emotional burden. Mothers of the girls warn their daughters to be cautious of their own safety. The development and growth of the girl child is checked at every stage of her evolution into adulthood and motherhood in such a way that she is conditioned by the will of older women who had been conditioned by the male text. This becomes a great hindrance to the inner psychological growth of the girl child.

Every traditionally nurtured Indian girl listens to common statements like, ‘A girl should not laugh so loudly; a girl should jump like this; a girl should learn to mend, to cook, to mop and to sweep as her ultimate destination is her husband’s place and if she does not learn household chores, she will bring shame to the family’ that become strong social taboos. Shashi Deshpande presents her view on the public and private life of men in comparison with that of women in her essay *Masks and Disguises* which is a part of her collection of essays under the title *Writing from the Margin and Other Essays*. She says that a man’s autobiography is all about his public life with a very few references to his family life. It is all about his intellectual life whereas a woman’s autobiography deals more with her private space. She recollects her visit to Sultan’s palace in Turkey. She says, “My amazement when I saw how small the harem was. And of how, even in that limited space, in
the rooms that were meant to be for the women, the man’s space was clearly marked out. The largest spaces were for the Sultan” (191).

The four women writers chosen for study in this research have unanimously reiterated the fact that right from childhood a girl should be given the right atmosphere and encouragement to be self-assured and self-assertive. On the contrary, girls are taught to nurture and to care. They are believed to be responsible for the welfare of others. They are expected to share power and solve conflicts and problems through non-violent means under the pretext that they are very soft, affectionate and have an attitude of sacrifice. But the boys are taught to fight for their rights, to conquer and to kill, to be strong enough to play with and exploit emotions.

Women are the deprived lot and do not get their due. The social norms in the names of customs, traditions, economic factor and cultural constraints block their way to a full-fledged life. And to beat it all, they remain ignorant of their legal rights. The society is androcentric and does not give them full play to deal with their own lives but sets measures to their abilities. Women have almost accepted their secondary role by devaluing themselves and by looking upon men as their protectors instead of companions and this has resulted in their very low self-esteem which gets reflected in their dispositions.

With the above perceptions, the novels chosen for the study have been discussed in this chapter with the main focus on woman’s role given to her by the tradition. Shashi Deshpande comes first in the hierarchical order. The novels of Shashi Deshpande are realistic and have an optimistic portrayal of the educated women from the middle class. Shashi Deshpande presents the social and psychological problems of women, highlighting their depressed feelings and suppressed desires. She also deals with the attitudes of society, especially of the women of the past generation to the women of the
In a recent interview to Anna Rego for *The Hindu*, Shashi Deshpande expresses her strong opinion of gender roles and the roles essayed by women as:

I write about women as they are, not about stereotypes but about real people.

…Oddly enough, my mother was highly educated but chose to live a different life. She shunned her educational background and was a deliberately submissive housewife. She chose to embrace the traditional role of wife and mother, because in those days society wasn’t too accepting of educated or career-oriented women. But my sister and I were very career-minded and at a certain level I believe my mother resented us for that. (7th April 2012)

A traditional mother’s approach towards her daughter is best expressed in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. Sarita (Saru) is revealed as a woman whose search for identity begins early in her childhood. The entire novel revolves around Saru’s quest to establish herself both in her family and in the society.

In the Indian concept of life, a woman is always under the care of men. During her earlier stages she is taken care of by her father followed by her brother. After marriage she comes under the care of her husband and later she obeys her son. Throughout her life she is forced to obey the words of men and fulfill their needs. The individuality and ambition of women are in one way or another exploited for the welfare of the family.

The Indian mothers have special affinity towards male children and give them preference over girls. Saru’s mother is not an exception and her mind is also conditioned by the age old tradition of patrilineage and she unremittingly follows it. She treats her son Dhruva as a precious treasure and gives Saru a very unhappy childhood. Saru is an intelligent and sensitive girl who disdains gender bias. She cannot endure her mother’s
biased preference and is filled with ambition and determination to prove herself and her proficiency. Saru’s memories are curdled over this discrimination shown by her mother in favour of her brother Dhruva. She recalls how his birthdays and other religious festivals related to him were celebrated with great fervour and special pujas along with joy and fun whereas her birthdays were rarely remembered. Saru recalls this later as,

Birthdays were not then the tremendous occasions they are made out to be now; but the excitement of having one, of being the centre of attraction never palled. It was always a fascinating thought – I was born’. But of my birth, my mother had said to me once….It rained heavily the day you were born. It was terrible. And somehow, it seemed to me that it was my birth that was terrible for her, not the rains. (TDHNT 169)

The mother’s bias in favour of Dhruva in every aspect triggers a feeling in Saru that she has been emotionally avoided. Gender discrimination and psychological suppression make her feel as a discarded child. She is forced to have a subordinate place at her home and does not have a clear idea about her future role in the society. On account of her mother’s harsh words, unbounded disgust develops in her and revulsion mars her relationship with her mother.

After the death of Dhruva, Saru’s mother complains that she is the cause for his death which creates a permanent scar in Saru’s mind. The bitterness that has crept in their relationship after Dhruva’s death and the constant reminder that she is a girl makes the growing Saru hate her sexuality. “You’re growing up she would say …. And it became something shameful, this growing up, so that you had to be ashamed of yourself, even in the presence of your own father” (TDHNT 62). This dejects Saru and she detests her mother. Saru’s mother makes her feel guilty for the death of her brother. She chides and
curses her with harsh words, “…Why didn’t you die? Why are you alive and he dead?” (TDHNT 34, 35).

When Saru informs her mother about her lover Manu, her mother looks down upon Manu’s caste and condemns her vehemently. She recalls the cold words uttered by her mother when she mentioned about her affair with Manu,

What caste is he?
I don’t know
A Brahmin
Of course, not
… His father keeps a cycle shop
Oh, so they are low-caste people, are they?
…. I hope so (TDHNT 96).

The phrase ‘low caste people’ used by her mother disapprovingly with disgust makes Saru sense the age old caste discriminations. She rages about the caste culture and with a revolt she replies “I hope so” (TDHNT 96). Her mother loathes Saru’s selection thus : “I know all these ‘love marriages’. It’s for love for a few days, then quarrels all the time. Don’t come crying to us then. To you? God, that’s the one thing I’ll never do. Never! ” (TDHNT 69).

Saru’s immediate reply to her mother reveals that her retaliation is not in response to her mother’s reproof but against her revulsion. Even though her mother objects to her proposal, she puts her foot down and marries Manu the day he acquires a room for them to live in. She ignores her mother’s displeasure and overlooks the hierarchical difference between their caste and his profession and marries Manu.

When Saru falls in love with Manu, she doubts her changed disposition saying “How
could I be anyone’s beloved? I was the redundant, the unwanted and an appendage one could do without” (TDHNT 66). This thought portends the height of her inferiority complex and insecurity and she covets for someone to take care of her. Though she is a doctor, her inner self is still conditioned by the longings and expectations of a traditional wife. During the initial stages of her marital life she is in a state of exaltation for she is blessed with a man of her taste and she has it all her own way. Basking in Manu’s love, Saru feels that she has achieved the traditional aim of being chosen by a ‘superior male’. She marries Manu with many expectations, craving to be valued and crazy to be his honey and to get contentment in the caressing love which she was deprived of by her parents.

Though marriages are solemnized as the union of two souls to live their life in harmonious companionship under any national or cultural context, the wife in the Indian social scenario normally plays a secondary role and gets treated like a supplement to the husband’s life. A wife is expected to wait on her husband’s every need. Manu enjoyed a happy childhood and after his marriage with Saru, he begins to enjoy a superior financial and social status. Saru and Manu have a harmonious relationship until Saru is only a home administrator but after she assumes the role of a well known lady doctor and he is recognized as her husband, he becomes jealous and is afflicted with inferiority complex. The ingrained traditional values in Manu, which rigidly declare that it is the husband’s duty to provide for his 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. He is unable to bear the higher status of his wife as a doctor and the prestige attached to that status in the society and this thought gradually destroys their marital life. Saru feels,

The human personality has an infinite capacity for growth, and so the esteem
with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps the same thing that made inches taller and made him inches shorter. He had been the young man and I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband. (TDHNT 42)

She loses peace after her success in her profession. Her professional growth diminishes her personal happiness. She bemoans her predicament in the following lines, “I want nothing so complicated. My wants are simpler. To sleep peacefully the night through. To wake up without pain. To go through tomorrow without apprehension. Not to think, not to dream. Just to live” (TDHNT 27).

Her financial independence makes her husband feel inferior. He wants to retain his masculinity by turning into a rapist every night. She has established herself as a successful doctor in the society but she cannot endure her husband’s sexual tortures. She could have raised objections but she mutely undergoes the brutality with silent tears:

And each time it happens and I don’t speak, I put another brick on the wall of silence between us. May be one day I will be walled alive within it and die a slow, painful death. Perhaps the process has already begun and what I am is a creature only half alive. And it seems I can do nothing to save myself.

(TDHNT 96)

This is the condition of women; though they are financially sound and socially well established, they cannot overcome the tortures they undergo or stand on their own feet. They have dutifully immersed themselves in a pool of responsibilities to fulfill their status of mother, wife, daughter and sister. They feel trapped in the hands of societal restrictions and silently swallow the depressions and the humiliations they undergo.

When Saru comes to know about her mother’s death, she feels that she has lost
something in her life seriously. She could not have a husband chosen by her parents and missed a wedding in the midst of her approving relatives, bowing dutifully to all of them, receiving their blessings, a child at the first lawful moment, in-laws and parents, proud and approving, grandparents, uncles and aunts for the child who slept in her arms. She has a thought that if her mother had accepted her she would not have gone for the selection of a marital life on her own.

Her traditional upbringing indoctrinated in her mind compels her to accept her life as such. Initially, she hesitates to retaliate and does not know how to show her protest. As a traditional woman she admits all her sufferings in the name ‘fate’ (another male indoctrinated text that women fall prey to). She recalls the life of her grandmother who had been deserted by her husband a few years after their marriage. She was left with two little girl children, one of them was Saru’s mother. Her grandmother’s father took care of his daughter and granddaughters and got the girls married. Her grandmother never complained about her life though she had been considered as a burden of the family. She simply accepted that it was her bad luck and the fate ruled her life. She lived for her children and tolerated all humiliations heaped on her. Saru’s grandmother’s way of life is emulated by Saru’s mother who also never complained about anything including her disease. The woman of yester years lived with tolerance and opted for silent suffering instead of grudging over the impossibilities.

Saru’s friend Smita, whose name was changed by her husband, reminds Saru that the patriarchal Indian society thrives on virtues like submission and self-effacement in women and does not recommend any other means of happiness for them. Her friend, Nalu, a man-hater, feminist is seen as a rebel – a misfit in the traditional Indian society. In this context Y.S. Sunita Reddy remarks that through Smita and Nalu (Saru’s another friend), “Shashi
Deshpande tries to repudiate the myth that woman find fulfillment only in marriage. She, however, does not go to the other extreme of proclaiming that all unmarried women are destined to be happy” (65).

Born and brought up in a conventional family, Saru’s mother had learnt to follow the tradition made by the society blindly. She steps into the role of the head of the family which imposes the traditions of a patriarchal society. Her blind faith in the righteousness of these patriarchal norms makes her a strict ruler. Instead of creating a balance by her authority she begins to rule over the lives of her husband and children. Her husband’s timidity and her bold and outspoken nature make her the dominant figure in the family.

The relationship between Saru and her mother is the main cause for the changes that happen in Saru’s life. Her mother imposes restrictions on her desires and does not allow even a simple desire to get fulfilled. She never allows her to go under the sun, to have a long walk, to spend more time with her friends, to choose her field of education and finally to select her own life partner. This behaviour is not an extraordinary one when compared to that of other women of her age. The traditional women have their conditional life with strict benchmarks. They want to be submissive and accept the inferior role passively. As a traditional woman, her attitude is that Saru is a young delicate innocent girl and destiny might bring in unseen threats to her life and she wants her daughter to be safe always. Sometimes she is rude and her words are cruel and hostile towards her own daughter which creates a sense of rivalry in Saru.

Saru’s mother does not extend her real affection towards her daughter and she proves her prejudice in favour of Dhruva by giving him a special priority. But as a mother she never deviates from the duty of her care for Saru. Even after the death of Dhruva, which she believes is due to Saru, she presents her gold ear rings on her fifteenth birthday. Saru has her
own prejudices against her mother and shows her dissent by not wearing the rings. The impression that her mother is her enemy never allows her to have a cordial talk with her mother. This impression stays in her mind till the end. But Saru’s mother tolerates Saru’s indifference and at one point of time she openly asks, “Can’t you talk? Am I so much below your notice?”…(TDHNT 170).

Apart from her prejudices in favour of her son, she has no personal grudge against Saru. She never shirks her responsibility as a mother but she does not know how to show her affection openly. The attitude of Saru, her opinion about her mother and her longing for independence make her find fault with her mother. This strange mother-daughter relationship is one of the important causes for the transformation in Saru’s life. Saru pours out everything to her father when she gets the chance. She expresses her helplessness in withstanding her husband’s tortures. “I couldn’t fight back, I couldn’t shout or cry … I could do nothing, I can never do anything. I just endure” (TDHNT 201).

Shashi Deshpande brings to light the fact that marriage is the only option in a girl’s life. She even treads on the problem of career women and their marital constraints. Saru’s success becomes the very cause of her crumbling marriage. The issue of woman being professionally superior to the husband goes against the traditional roles set by matrimony. Through the Saru-Manu relationship Shashi Deshpande brings to sharp focus the issue 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.

Saru expects consoling words from her father. She requests him to help her to overcome her struggles. She says, “Baba, I’m unhappy. Help me Baba, I’m in trouble. Tell me what to do” (TDHNT 44). She also asks her father to guide her to find a way to live a peaceful life. She explains that she is leading a life with only regrets: “…But you have got
to help me, you have got to, You did it once. And because you did I went to Bombay, met him and married him” (TDHNT 204).

Her feelings never get articulated, at times she regrets for having come to her parents’ house, for her duty consciousness makes her remember her children, her practice and her patients. Though Saru has become a famous and well known lady doctor, she unconsciously bears the ideas of a traditional womanhood in her psyche. For her the customary practice of men going for work, children going to school and women staying at home to work, clean, scrub and sweep will give a sense of harmony and a kind of satisfaction. Staying at home and working gives her a sense of contentment without any busy schedule in her routine.

Saru acquiesces in the condition of subordinate position in her life. When she is in a situation of deciding whether to take Manu into her life or to renounce him, she is in a dilemma; and after a bit of confusion she decides to meet him as a mark of her acceptance duly giving respect to the family custom and societal status. Thus she falls a victim to the traditional imprints on herself. Saru, from the very beginning has been against her mother’s restrictions and she has showed her individuality in all possible ways. But since she has an unconscious bent towards tradition she decides to accept Manu as such.

Shashi Deshpande’s *That Long Silence* is another landmark in the study of women in various perspectives. The novel talks about an Indian housewife who maintains her silence throughout her life despite the hardships that threaten to break it. Jaya, the protagonist of the novel is torn between love and hate, liking and disliking for her own husband and life situations. She must follow the rules and customs and should continue as an obedient and submissive wife which is the righteous path for a married woman in the Hindu culture. But this is another extreme of tyranny and mechanical subservience to a husband as if he were a
God to his wife.

*That Long Silence* is a story unfolded by Jaya in the first person narrative. The name ‘Jaya’ means victory, but in her real life she is forced to live as a traditional, passive and obedient wife. Right from her childhood, she has been influenced by the stories about Sita, Savithri and Draupathi describing their sharing of their husbands’ travails and their silent sufferings. Shashi Deshpande, in her essay *Masks and Disguises* which is a part of *Writing from the Margin and Other Essays*, points out a passage from the transcreation of the Mahabharatha by Prof. Lal which portrays different attitudes of women in being a perfect match to their husbands. In that piece of work, Sathyabama asks Draupadi in person the reason for her peaceful marital life. She further queries how her husbands never get angry with her and she also wants to know whether she uses any drugs, mantras and cosmetics for attracting her husbands. Shashi Deshpande quotes the words of Draupadi to Sathyabama:

I put aside my ego. I try not to be jealous; I strive to be modest and gracious. I neither bathe nor eat nor sleep till my husband has; till in fact, our servants have. When he returns from the town or forest, I have water and a seat ready for him…(181-182).

Thus silence is the best quality that has been expected from a woman. She should bear the sufferings silently, tolerate the pain silently, solve others’ problems silently and accept everything silently. When Jaya was told of the stories of these legendry women, her grandmother chided her for her inquisitive nature and cautioned her by saying, “for everything’s question, for everything a retort. What husband can be comfortable with that? (TLS 11-12). She has been cautioned and conditioned towards the comforts of her future life. The dialogues like “…a husband is like a sheltering tree” (TLS 137), “the happiness of
your husband and home depends entirely on you” (TLS 138) are warning bells for her to take care of her husband. Being in the good books of a husband, praying for his longevity and proliferation of his lineage by giving birth to a male child are said to be the main goals of any woman.

Jaya’s temperamental weakness is her predominant adolescent nature. After becoming a married woman, she is unable to understand her mother and finds fault with her for selling the house and making her homeless. Kamat, her friend, considers her a “sulky, glowering teenager” (TLS 153) when Jaya reveals her preoccupation with her parents. Kamat comments on her character as, “I must say you have the monstrous ego of a child” (TLS 154).

Jaya is a model of an Indian married woman who has to go along with the tradition despite having all progressive ideas. Kamat encourages Jaya to write and motivates her to express her life experiences in her writings. For this, she feels a love that is more than gratitude, a love that falls outside the conventional boundaries. This breeds fear which impels her to run away from the place the moment she sees Kamat’s dead body. Though she has intense feelings for him, she avoids giving vent to her emotions, she writes:

The loneliness of a man facing his death – is there anything like that in this World? His pain filled this room and we could both of us feel it, Mukta and I.
The fellowship of pain seemed to bind us together. We were like two patients in a hospital, suffering from the same disease, lying on the adjacent beds.

(TLS 186)

Kamat helps her so much to make her a writer. Somehow she has developed a soft corner for him but she is unable to lend him a helping hand because she has to perform her role as Mohan’s wife to a possible perfection. But she fails as a human being: “He tried to
reach out to me in his loneliness and it had frightened me. I’m Mohan’s wife, I had thought, I’m only Mohan’s wife, and I had run away” (TLS 186).

Jaya submits and surrenders to Mohan without revolting. Silently she bends to his will. She never says ‘yes’ when her husband asks her whether he has hurt her. She endures everything, tolerates all kinds of masculine oppressions silently: “In the emotion that governed my behaviour to him, there was still the habit of being a wife, of sustaining and supporting” (TLS 48).

Jaya does not want to irritate her husband by continuing her writing which she thinks might even hurt her husband’s ego. She ironically says:

Perhaps, if Mohan had been angry, if he had shouted and raged me, if he had forbidden me to write, perhaps I would have fought him and gone on. But he had shown me his hurt. And I had been able to counter that. I had relinquished this instead all those stories that had been taking shape in me because I had been scared by hurting Mohan, scared of jeopardizing the only career I had. (TLS 144)

It is Jaya who makes, “the first conciliatory move” (TLS 82). A dominating husband and a suffering wife – that is her binding with Mohan. She does not react immediately to the situation but recollects it and reacts later. In the solitude, Jaya’s mind oscillates between the past and the present and covers the whole span of her life. Madhavi Menon comments, “Deshpande’s heroines like Jaya are rebels but only passive ones whose incarcerated lamentations are but cries in the wilderness and mute and desperate calls to restructure the groove of society” (90).

In the case of Jaya, strong social and family pressures stifle her creativity and hold her subservient to her husband in her role as a home maker. Jaya says, “Like a disease, a
disability I had to hide from everyone” (TLS 97). Jaya is not a revolutionary character but wants to be different from the lifestyle of a regular housewife. In order to bring out what type of mind Jaya has, Deshpande uses an apt image of a worm clothing into a hole to describe the state of Jaya, a budding writer fading into a typical Indian housewife:

Middle class bourgeois. Upper caste. Distanced from real life. Scared of writing scared of failing. Oh, God, I had thought. I can’t take anymore. Even a worm has hole it can crawl into. I had mine…as Mohan’s wife, as Rahul’s and Rati’s mother. (TLS 148)

Her urges are silent and her mute pining are passively manifested in moments of crisis and in “chaotic sequence of events and non event” (TLS 167) that make up her life. She is silent because “It was so much simpler to say nothing. So much less complicated” (TLS 99). The metaphor of silence for her is a retreat, a defence mechanism which helps her to express herself more comprehensively and artistically.

Jaya’s feelings echo the words of Simone de Beauvoir, “Marriage subjugates and enslaves women and it leads her to aimless days, indefinitely repeated, life that slips away gently toward death without questioning its purpose”(500). Women pay for their happiness at the cost of their freedom and de Beauvoir emphasized that such a sacrifice on the part of a woman is too high for anyone because the kind of self-contentment, serenity and security that marriage offers woman, drains her soul of its capacity for greatness. “She shuts behind her the doors of her new home. When she was a girl, the whole countryside was her homeland; the forests were hers. Now she is confined to a restricted space” (502).

Jaya, being renamed as Suhasini after the marriage, is not a case of the loss of identity since Jaya and Suhasini are the two facets of the same coin and these two collateral names of the Deshpande’s protagonist are symbolic in their socio familial import. Jaya, her
pre-marital name, means ‘victory’ and Suhasini, the post marital name given to her by her husband, means, “a soft smiling, placid motherly woman. A woman who lovingly nurtured her family, a woman who coped” (TLS 15).

When Jaya writes a story which talks about her personal life, Mohan protests saying, “Jaya how could you, how could you have done it?...They will all know now, all those people who read this and know us, they will know that these two persons are us” (TLS 143-144). Though she has a penchant for writing she gives in when her husband asks her to give up writing stories. In spite of her liberal convictions she subscribes to the patriarchal conventions and hopes that her child must be a boy. She is tormented by an abortion concealed from her husband. When her young son runs away from home she is crushed by a sense of inadequacy as a mother. Though she is a prolific writer, she curtails her desire to write because traditionalism, which is the rule of the society, prevents her from disobeying the words of her husband.

Jaya lives in a stifling and suffocating domestic ambience and she finds her female identity effaced in the patriarchal set-up. She has her agonized cries out, “I can’t hope, I can’t manage, I can’t go on” (TLS 70). Her dilemma is expressed in her vacillating state of mind, “I could and couldn’t do, all the things that were womanly and unwomanly” (TLS 83). Jaya becomes Suhasini after her marriage and also ‘Seeta’, the pseudonym she assumes to write columns about the plight of the middle class housewife. Both ‘Suhasini’ and ‘Seeta’ are as Jaya says, “the many selves waiting to be discovered… each set attached like a Siamese twin to a self of another person, neither able to exist without the other” (TLS 69). Jaya’s self-attitude comes as a split in the narrative. She broods over the metaphor of the ‘sheltering tree’.

A sheltering tree. Without the tree, you are dangerously unprotected… equally,
logically and vulnerable. This followed logically. And so you have to keep the tree alive and flourishing, even if you have to water it with deceit and lies.

This too followed, equally logically. (TLS 32)

Struggling with the threats to her freedom and her intellect, Jaya desperately needs to protect herself from dissipating and sinking into the crumbling world around her. Her hysterical laugh at the absurdity of marriage echoes the insane woman’s laughter. It symbolizes her cousin Kusum’s insanity through which she tries to define herself negatively. Hence the self-questionings “Who am I?” (TLS 24). She thinks “Am I going crazy like Kusum?” (TLS 125)

The expectations men have on women while selecting their partner undergo a variety of conditions and analyses. But women are not supposed to entertain any such expectation and if there is a mismatch, it is said to be their fate. They should bear the insults and sufferings silently and should not voice out their tribulations. If they tolerate their suppressions silently they are named as the perfect women on the earth. Though Jaya belongs to modernity and writes on women’s problems in the magazines, she has in her subconscious self the tinge of traditionalism which makes her undergo the suppressions silently. Mohan wanted a well educated and cultured wife, not a reciprocating and loving one. So he resolved to marry Jaya when he saw her speaking fluently:

You know Jaya, the first day I met you at your Ramukaka’s house, you were talking to your brother Dinkar, and somehow you sounded so much like that girl. I think it was at that moment that I decide I would marry you. (TLS 90)

An intellectually idealized and cultural husband like Mohan finds Jaya a square peg in a round hole. There develops disheartening silence between the husband and the wife. Mohan’s queries remain unanswered by Jaya for she is unable to find a word of response, “I
racked my brains trying to think of an answer” (TLS 31). Jaya’s mother never raised a voice against her father. Mohan thinks Jaya is not sufficiently trained to play the role of a good wife and according to him a woman in anger is “ugly and unwomanly” (TLS 83).

It is quite clear that tolerance and suffering in silence and surrender are the marks of goodness for a woman as a wife and a daughter-in-law while mothers-in-law who are tyrannical are considered as “Gohouls” (TLS 45). The Greek thought that “a woman is her womb” (TLS 107) fills Jaya with remorse and guilt after the abortion. At the face of it Jaya’s predicament seems existential and she often finds life absurd and meaningless. However, the feminist rebellion and defiance in Jaya’s conduct are based on the principles of the rejection of the bad and the acceptance of the good in the time honoured values and traditions.

Githa Hariharan’s first novel *The Thousand Faces of Night*, depicts the story of Devi who comes from a liberal background but has the roots of tradition and rituals in her psyche. After spending two years in the U.S.A. as a student, she returns accepting an arranged marriage, to live a traditional Indian married life. Her new life is familiar as well as alien to her and she has to understand the real meaning of the word ‘adjustment’.

Devi’s life is influenced by her mother Sita, her carnatic music, Devi’s grandmother’s mythological tales and the life story of Mayamma, an old retainer in her husband’s household. Devi’s grandmother told many mythological stories in her childhood. Whenever Devi posed questions about the conditions of the women around them, the grandmother usually narrated a story appropriate to the occasion instead of giving a direct reply. The parallels and the mythological equivalents had a profound impact on Devi’s mind. When Devi inquired about the Veena in her mother’s photograph, her grandmother narrated the story of Gandhari. Sita, Devi’s mother had brought a Veena with her when she
came to the house of her in-laws and used to play on it when she found leisure time.

In the Hindu family, a bride’s position is primarily to fulfill the responsibilities of a daughter-in-law more than that of a wife. The in-laws and other family members view the newly arrived bride with suspicion and overloaded expectations. They never understand that she grapples with the new situation and tries hard to come to terms with herself in the changed environment.

Sudhir Kakar provides a psychological explanation to the family’s response as the arrival of a new member into the family invariably gives the apprehension of the loss of a family member to the newcomer:

Unflinchingly and without complaint, the new daughter-in-law is required to perform some of the heaviest household chores, which may mean getting up well before dawn and working till late at night. Any mistakes or omissions on her part are liable to incur sarcastic references to her abilities, her looks or her upbringing in her mother’s home. For it must be noted once again that the new bride constitutes a very real threat to the unity of the extended family. She represents a potentially pernicious influence which, given priorities, calls for drastic measures of exorcism. (59)

Sita’s father-in-law once admonished her for neglecting her duties and questioned whether she was really a wife and a daughter-in-law. She had been offended by her father-in-law’s rebuttal, hung her head over the Veena for a while and then pulled the strings out of the wooden base. The grandmother compares this act of Sita to that of Gandhari’s blindfolding her own eyes. Thus the grandmother tells Devi that this is an act of penance on the part of Sita that reminds one of the posture adopted by Gandhari in blindfolding her eyes with a piece of cloth. Sita has not touched veena from that day onwards. She
devotes all her energy for the welfare of the family and gives over her intellect in making her husband a successful man in his professional life. Thoroughly ‘exorcised’ by the words of her father-in-law, she comes to believe only in “order, reason, progress” (TFN 26). She gives the impression of a woman who “hated all illusion” (TFN 105). She has changed herself completely with her immense self-confidence and she concentrates more on the family’s prestige and fortunes than on her own pleasures.

Mahesh was brought up in a family set up that believes that the role of a wife lies in being confined to the house and should be a non-interference even in the activities and business of the males. Devi has her old father-in-law and Mayamma to keep her company. She seeks solace in the presence of her father-in-law who is a Sanskrit scholar and offers words of wisdom steeped in tradition. He dilates on the role of a woman in a household as prescribed in the ancient texts and advises that in order to be honoured in the heavens it is enough for a woman to serve her husband dutifully and there is no need to perform sacrifice or to take vow or undergo fasting.

Devi learns her vital duty from Mayamma, her old servant who may be called family retainer. Mayamma got married to a drunkard when she was still a young girl and she was abused by her mother-in-law and her husband. To beget a child, Mayamma’s mother-in-law advised her to do penance to change the course of the horoscope. Mayamma, at this, “invited penance as an old friend” (TFN 80). She prayed, made vows and took bath at four in the morning while starving every other day. Ten years of penance, she thought, bore fruit as she was blessed with a son on an auspicious day. But her hopes were short-lived. The child grew into a wastrel who was no better than his father. At fourteen, he forced his mother to part with her diamond ear ring by beating her. But he suddenly fell ill and died after prolonged illness.
Mayamma had learnt the art of survival slowly and painfully. If frustrations in life cannot be resolved either through suppression or sublimation, then the mind prepares its own defence-mechanism. Devi’s mother Sita advises Devi that the key to married life is the ability to endure and go on. Sita follows this theory very well in her life and she fulfills the role of a dutiful daughter, a sincere wife and a dedicated mother. She dedicates herself to her domestic responsibilities and sacrifices her well being. Despite her daughter’s western education, she takes her back into the Indian culture. When Devi returns after completing her education in America, tradition and the old order of things reclaim her into an arranged marriage. As she gets exasperated with her husband Mohan, she learns that the important duty of an Indian wife is to pretend to be a good wife, to pretend to love and entertain husband’s family and friends and to pretend not to feel sick or angry.

Anita Nair, a writer of repute has many novels to her credit. The well mixed combination of tradition and artistic integrity make the lives more appealing in her works. She examines the lives of women and their psyche in the background of the limitations imposed by the society. She treats women with their traditional roles such as mothers, wives and daughters. She has an intense emotional relationship with her characters.

Anita Nair’s *Ladies Coupe* is an explicit visual description of feminine psyche and the vehemence of passions it produces. The novel portrays the problems of women at varied socio-economical levels and age groups in the society through their conversation. It talks mainly about six women characters with a few references to Akhila’s mother, Karpagam, Sarasa Mami and her daughter and Akhila’s friend Catherine.

Anita Nair shows how the conservative and orthodox Amma (Akhila’s mother), a devoted wife with her own theory ‘It is best to accept that a wife is inferior to the husband and it is so much easier and simpler to accept one’s station in life and live accordingly’,
overcomes the crisis of early widowhood, in her own way. She lets her eldest daughter Akhila take over the responsibilities.

Akhila with her three siblings had a restricted childhood. Her mother gave importance only to her father and made everything special for him and trained the children that they should never bother about the first preference given to him. There was a special cooking, special songs and special steel almirah for him. She found pleasure in serving her husband and never allowed even the children to do his odd jobs. She projected herself as a devoted wife and the best caretaker. Being a straight-forward clerk in Income Tax office he earned a little for the family. Her mother feels proud of her father’s earnings and his clean habits.

Akhila’s mother is proud to be a good housewife. She feels proud when she makes her husband happy. She says,” There is no such thing as an equal marriage” (LC 14). She readily accepts her husband’s superiority over her. For her it is a virtue to accept that the wife is inferior to the husband. Tradition bound women like Akhila’s mother never accept the faults of their husbands even though they are aware of them. They have confidence in their husband’s intelligence and feel proud of their decisions. This is the attitude of every Indian woman who dedicates herself to her husband. Her surrender to husband as her master makes her feel that she is blessed. She mends and works for the benefit of her husband and later for the children too. Akhila’s mother did everything to satisfy her husband as he was not only her master but also her God.

When Akhila suggested to her mother to teach music so that she could buy something for them she immediately replied that it was against her father’s wish.

If I wanted a working wife, then I would have married someone like that, he told me when we were first married. I want my wife to take care of my
children and me. I don’t want so caught up with her job that she has no time for the house or for taking care of my needs, and that’s all I wanted to as well.

A good wife. (LC 13-14)

Above all her positions, being a good wife is a real credit to her. For her, no good wife could serve two masters. A good wife learns to put her husband’s interests before anyone else’s, even her father’s. A good wife should obey and listen to her husband.

Akhila’s mother gives importance to every ritual including drawing kolam (designs drawn using rice flour) on the floor every day. She constantly chastises her daughter on the values of the past as laid down by traditional elders:

Do you know what Thiruvalluvar said? A true wife is she whose virtues match her home . . . your everyday kolam has to show that while you are thrifty, you are not mean. It should speak of your love for beauty and your eye for detail. A restraint, a certain elegance and most importantly, an understanding of your role in life. Your kolam should reflect who you are: a good housewife.

(LC 50)

It is a belief that there are good kolams brimming with all the womanly virtues that made mothers-in-law refer to their daughters-in-law as the ‘guiding light of the family’. The tradition of the family should be carried out to the next generations only through the women. When Akhila wants to go to Sarasa Mami’s house to put Vadaam (a kind of pappad) her mother tells, “… I don’t want you standing in the sun. I don’t want you burnt black. You need to look after your complexion. All men want fair-skinned wives even if they are black as coal themselves” (LC 51).

Saru’s mother in The Dark Holds No Terrors also insists the same thing. The mothers of the young girls want their daughters to maintain their complexion to get a
better groom. This attitude is also given by Kaveri Nambisan in her *The Hills of Angheri*.

The patriarchal society believes that every woman should be married and she is worthless if unmarried. Her life reaches completion only when she shares life with a man. During Akhila’s childhood, her parent’s togetherness did not vex her. She was a part of that enchanted circle as well. But as she grew up, their playfulness, their affection, the obvious pleasure they found in each other’s presence made her feel excluded but later, it embarrassed her. They remained completely oblivious to her mortification. When her father died, her mother felt that it was not just the loss of a husband but something more than that. “She had lost more than a husband. He had been part of her life from the moment she was born…In many ways, it was only natural that he should be the one to show her the wonder of being a woman” (LC 11). Thus the loss of her husband shatters her as if she has no life at all. The dependence of womanhood on man in the name of marriage is well presented through the character of Akhila’s mother.

After the unexpected death of Akhila’s father, the family needs financial support. So, being the eldest, Akhila has to take up the responsibilities. When Akhila wants to go to Mahabalipuram, her mother instructs her to get permission from her brothers. Even though she is the only earning member of the family, she cannot be assertive. The patriarchal imprint in the mind of her mother compels Akhila to be subservient to her brothers who are younger and dependent on her. This creates in Akhila a sense of humiliation. Her mother’s advice to behave submissively to her brothers as is the custom of the society makes her boil in anger. Though she does not want to be a prey to the male domination, she silently bears the burden of the family.

Anita Nair brings out that this is the case for every earning woman who has lost her life for the family. In the name of society and cultural binding they lose everything and work
for others, spend their youth for others’ benefits and finally gain nothing. They are secretly warned to be wary of their desires in the name of culture and tradition.

Janaki Prabhakaran (Janaki), the oldest lady in the compartment, is very much like Akhila’s mother. She believes that a woman’s life is complete by means of submission to her husband. She has been married for forty years and has been under the care of others since her childhood. She has been pampered by her father, brother, husband and son. She is obviously unaware of the reality of life. She feels fulfillment in the marital life. For her, a woman’s duty is to marry and lead a life of submission to her husband.

Being a good wife and good mother is Janaki’s view on womanhood. For a woman, her house is her kingdom. Janaki has a fully satisfied marital life as her husband Prabhakar pampers and gives an extra care every moment. She finds comfort in him and projects that they are the golden couple. Her attitude delivers her nature of finding comfort only in the hands of her husband who is her owner. She portrays the traditional Indian woman. Women of her kind are well accepted by our culture and praised as the models of successful womanhood. Her words make Akhila ponder over her mistake of being alone.

The idea of Manusmrithi that woman should be taken care of by men all through her life is well presented in the life of Janaki. When she narrates her story she says,

I am a woman who has been looked after. First there was my father and my brothers: then my husband. When my husband is gone, there will be my son. Waiting to take off where his father left off. Women like me end up being fragile. Our men treat us like princess. And because of that we look down upon women who are strong and who can cope by themselves. (LC 22-23)

When Akhila wanted to tell her mother about her love for Hari, she knew that her
mother would not accept or understand her love. For her mother, men married women younger to themselves. Women should not offer their bodies before their wedding. Women should not go away with men who were not their husbands. Though Akhila was in love with Hari, she knew that the age barrier could not be bridged. She found that she would get a constant fear that she would become much older than him and he might turn away from her. Some day he might regret his relationship with her, regret for having spurned his family to be with her, regret for being bound to her when he could have been with someone younger and more suitable. This constant fear of an unbearable love would destroy everything and leave her with nothing, not even her self-respect. She openly tells Hari, … it bothers me that we are not suited. That I am older and look older, and I can’t live with the thought that someday you might regret this relationship, that you might turn away and I would be left nothing – neither you nor my family. (LC 153)

On several occasions, Akhila gives in to others’ decisions that encroach on her personal life, without protesting. She accepts her sister Padma’s stay with her, supports her financially and tolerates every humiliation caused by her. She thinks only about the society and not about herself or her self-respect. She suffers silently. She has no courage to voice out her desires and moreover she is not sure about what she needs.

Margaret Shanthi (Margaret), a chemistry teacher who is also in the coupe shares her life with the fellow passengers. She briefs her life, its turning points and take-over. Her mother advised her on the eve of her wedding about the loyalty towards the husband. She told that woman had to take extra effort to make the marital life successful. Obeying her mother’s advice and with the unwavering love for her husband, she wished only what he wanted her to do. She gave up her desire to get a doctorate and did her B.Ed to become a
teacher, cut her long hair, stopped going to church on every Sunday, stopped eating from the roadside shops and finally aborted her child to fulfill the wishes of her husband. She blindly accepted whatever her husband said and wanted to project herself as a good wife. When she complained about the unhappiness in her life, her mother replied,

It is normal to quarrel with one’s husband. Every day won’t be the same when you’ve been married to a man for years… And like I have said many time before, it is a woman’s responsibility to keep the marriage happy. (LC 112)

Prabha Devi another fellow passenger in the coupe talks about her life. She pretends that she is bold and confident and can take decisions on her own but in reality she has her own difficulties in her life. When she was born, her father sighed. He had hoped it would be a boy though he already had four boys. But her mother is pleased with her daughter as she can leave her recipes about cookery. She believes that only a girl child will boast about her parent’s home even after her wedding. This is what every Indian woman thinks of while begetting girls. But the responsibilities over the girl children and the loss of finance in the name of their wedding and settling them in life terrify them and make them not to prefer a girl child. Prabha Devi’s mother convinces her husband saying, “We have four sons. A daughter can do no harm. Besides when it is time for her to be married, you can choose a family that will and your business interests” (LC 169).

Prabha Devi’s mother belongs to the yester year and knows the pulse of the patriarchal society. She has the view that silence is the best expression that any woman can have. For her a woman with an opinion would be treated like a bad smell fit to be shunned. So she swallows her thoughts all through her life. Prabha Devi’s father wants to bring her daughter up in such a way that she will be a saleable commodity. He sends her to convent to get English education, allows her to be modern enough to fulfill the expectation
of the young men of her generation. When she attains eighteen years, he happily finds Jagdeesh as her life partner. Jagdeesh is the only son of a famous diamond merchant and they can expand their business in the stores of Prabha Devi’s father.

The novelist illustrates the idea that in any tradition bound country like India, repression results in the suffering of an individual, that too in particular, suffering of women. Prabha Devi’s story reveals that any relationship has its own limitations. Any violation of the limit will surely result in breakage. Prabha Devi grasps this principle, changes her style and becomes a highly dedicated wife and a sincere mother. Akhila tries to correlate the story of Prabha Devi with her life. She feels that she has failed to draw the line of demarcation with other relationships to enjoy her own life.

Sheela, a fellow passenger in the *Ladies coupe* takes her grandmother as her role model. Though her grandmother belongs to the old generation and is dying of cancer, she is very modern in her thoughts. Sheela is best understood by her grandmother whereas her father constantly finds fault with her and controls her. He used to scold her even for silly things and Sheela wants to protest but she does not raise her voice against him. When she was a little girl, her father encouraged her to speak like an adult. He enjoyed her razor-edged wit. But after she has grown up, he sees her as a woman and no longer his little girl. She wants to tell her father not to feel proud of her quick answers, instead teach her to swallow words and kill her spirit and tame her tongue.

Marikolundu, one of the passengers in the coupe and the worst affected by the patriarchal dominance tells her story to Akhila. She describes how much she suffered and underwent turmoil and troubles in life. When she got a job in the Chettiar Kottai as a baby sitter, she felt proud of herself as she could contribute to the growth of her brothers financially. When she received glass bangles from Sujata Akka, Chettiar’s daughter-in-law
happily, her mother advised her not to expect anything from anyone. She insisted that there would be no disappointment when there was no expectation. She told that Marikolundu’s life would never become the one like the life of a silkworm, to be made use of through life and death.

The realistic picture of the humble and often miserable lives of the peasant women, the destitution and injustice in villages is presented through Marikolundu, whose innocence was destroyed by one night of lust. In Marikolundu’s life we find ample material for wonder, terror and transport. The incidents in Marikolundu’s life cause aversion and disbelief. In the sad, toilsome, exploited and erring life of Marikolundu, Anita Nair exposes with brutality the evil motives that govern human actions. The novelist presents her characters in the backdrop of English doctors who are known for their homosexual relationship. Marikolundu’s encounter with the two lesbian English doctors helps her to satisfy the physical desires of Sujata. Marikolundu undergoes turbulence and horrors but ultimately wrests control of her destiny and seeks happiness for herself. Thus Anita Nair has moulded her thoughts into easy and significant words without any superficialities of expression.

Nalli, in Kavery Nambisan’s *The Hills of Angheri*, being a village girl surrounded by people steeped in the age old culture and traditional beliefs, tries hard to escape into a new world of modernity. Her choice of selecting medicine is not accepted by her family members and even by her relatives. Her father rejects her choice by telling that her health condition is poor to work for the sick people. He adds that it is quite impossible for her to strain in the field of medicine. He says, “Six years of study and then a life time of hard work. You aren’t strong” (HA 30). Her relatives criticize her that higher education will spoil her personal life. They are of the view that she might have a chance to elope with somebody
who would be unworthy of her and to the family. Her grandfather who is the preserver of the family tradition is completely against her medical education.

Nalli’s father finally agrees to her request after a great wavering of mind and she joins the Medical College in Madras. There Nalli finds it very difficult to place herself among the freaks and moderns in the campus. A sense of inferiority complex engulfs her and to come out of it she changes her dress code, cuts her long hair and modifies her speech. When she visits the village during vacation, everyone comments on her short hair and her changed style. It is her father’s visit to the college makes her feel uneasy as she is about to leave for outing with her boyfriends.

Though she moulds herself to fix into the modern set up, she has her inner restrictions towards the change in life. She just wants to escape from the prevailing condition of her life but not to reframe anything. Her silence in the Government hospital against bribery, Jai’s negligence towards their village and his involvement in earning more money induce a sense of frustration in her. But she is not very strong to act against any malpractice or she cannot voice out her view related to anything. She silently watches everything without reacting to it. Her in-built restrictions force her to keep silent. Her attitude of skipping the work spot shows her existential problem.

When Jai gets the medical seat, the entire village feels happy and considers that Jai is a gift to their village. Everyone thinks that Jai is worthy of getting the medical seat as he is the intelligent boy in the whole village. But when Nalli gets the medical seat, nobody including her relatives appreciates it. They consider that sending Nalli to medical college is a mere waste as it involves unnecessary expenditure on education which is quite unwanted for a girl. They are of the opinion that she will in no way be useful to the village and to the family as she will leave them in the name of marriage very soon. Therefore they discourage
her from going to medical college but she remains stubborn in her decision and so her father has to bend to her wishes. He gets the application form with the condition that he will send her to the medical college only if she gets the seat on merit. She strives hard and gets the seat on merit and her father has no option at all and sends her to the medical college as per her desire.

Nalli has secret dreams for Jai and desires to settle down in the village to serve the people at Angheri. But she has never expressed her desire to anyone about her secret love for Jai. Whenever her parents and her sister insist on her marriage she silently gets away from the place. She convinces them that she does not like marital life but wants to establish herself as a doctor. Her stay with her sister in Mysore gives her a sense of unrest. She cannot be normal and shuts herself of everyone at home. She wants to avoid talking to anyone and pretends that she is busy or in a gloomy mood. When her sister Sujju compels her to get into marital life she replies, “I’m quite happy not being married. I like being a doctor” (HA 164). On her refusal, Sujju comments: “A few more years and no one will look at you. All this reading and learning that you want to do will frighten them away”(HA 164). She further adds, “I have a husband and a family. I have status. Do you know what happens to women without a husband? I don’t have to tell you…”(HA 165).

Nalli becomes anxious and restless. She believes that her father will understand her but her father says that he is no longer proud of her. “Is it such a difficult thing I’m asking? We’re not forcing a husband on you” (HA 165). He plans for a meeting with eligible doctors to select a life partner for her. But she rejects it saying that she is not for marriage. Her father is fed up and declares, “You’re my problem child!” He expresses his frustration as, “I expected the best from you, spent more on your education than Vishnu’s and you repay me with ingratitude” (HA 165). Though she has a strong desire to establish herself as a doctor
and prove her ability as a surgeon and to serve the needy, from her heart of hearts she is unhappy with the way she leads her life. She finds that she doesn’t fix herself to the environment of Mysore and the corruptive atmosphere of the city life. She feels a vague disquiet, resentment directed at everyone.

Nalli is strong in her ideas. Though everyone in the family forces her to settle down in life, she does not want to get married because she has already made her mind up after Jai’s wedding. Belying her expectations, Jai has married another woman. But Nalli does not have any grudge against Jai. She remains a spinster and continues her relationship with Jai only for the purpose of constructing a hospital in Angheri. She visits Jai in Bombay and patiently waits for him to talk about the plan of coming back to their village. She feels frustrated when she learns that Jai is unwilling to come back as he is after money and fame and has no concern for the villagers who are still expecting his service in the village. Nalli gets angry with the way Jai reacted but she is unable to retaliate and controls her emotions and feelings. She does not want to burst out as she thinks she has nothing to do with the life of Jai. As a modern doctor, she would have expressed her distaste in his decision and disloyalty towards his village. But the inborn silence and tolerance make her keep quiet and accept the fact as it is. She wants to build a hospital on her own in the village but the lack of interest and support from her relatives and neighbours pushes her aside. Nobody believes that she will do her best for the village and she too struggles to establish herself as a doctor like Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* who establishes herself as a successful physician in the society. Saru’s success results in misunderstanding in her marital life but in the case of Nalli she lacks confidence in her profession also. She tries to pull Jai to stand by her to serve the village. Normally a woman who is immersed in traditional ideas finds it very difficult to come out of the shell and prove her ability. Her traditionalism pulls
her down from her level of confidence and she struggles a lot to come out of it.

Kavery Nambisan presents even Nalli’s mother as gifted with the power of determination. After the death of Nalli’s father her mother’s will power takes the family forward and makes the people in the family understand their responsibilities. There is nothing much relating to the traditional attitudes of female characters in the novel except Nalli’s hesitation to get into her successful profession and marriage.

A careful analysis of the characters of Shashi Deshpande, Saru from *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and Jaya from *That Long Silence* will reveal that education in no way reshapes the attitudes of women. Women in Indian society feel content with their submissiveness to their husbands even if they can excel themselves the best. Githa Hariharan presents her woman characters in such a way that they psychologically feel comfortable under the careful supervision of men. Man offers shelter which she accepts even though she is financially independent. Anita Nair’s characters are all socially inhibited and emotionally attached to their family and traditionalism does not permit them to stand on their own feet. Kavery Nambisan presents Nalli in such a way that her education has less role to play in proving her mettle. Her migration to various places and her acquaintance with various people reveal her insatiable desire to establish herself. The inherent traditionalism never allows her to break loose from the restrictions of life and she silently accepts her life without any outward mourning. All the woman characters have indomitable spirit to live a full-fledged life but traditionalism blocks the avenues to express their potentialities and nips them in the bud.