CHAPTER-VI

A MATTER OF TIME

A Matter of Time is yet another pivotal novel by the author Shashi Deshpande. It is widely acclaimed novel of her literary oeuvre. It got published in 1996 by the reputed Penguin Books which has published most of her novels. Widely reputed and open to critical diagnosis this present novel helps put forth Deshpande’s philosophical notions and establishes her concern with her sisterhood. No doubt Deshpande’s streak of feminism has progressed with this novel. Her vision is explicitly understood here. This novel is a fine study in female subjugation in yet another female character, Sumi, after Sarita, Indu and Jaya of The Dark Holds No Terrors, Roots and Shadows and That Long Silence respectively. Not only it dwells on the theme of female subjugation rather it takes Shashi Deshpande’s feminism far ahead as it opens her very notions about female liberation. Deshpande has delineated the predicament and the misfortunes that befall the central character very well.

This present novel talks about woman’s emancipation. It puts forth Shashi Deshpande’s views on women’s emancipation. Shashi Deshpande has already talked about women’s liberation and empowerment in her previous novels i.e. The Dark Holds No Terrors, Roots and Shadows and That Long Silence. That Long Silence is a emphatic attempt by the novelist to bring forth her issues of women’s liberation. The female protagonist in the previous chapter Jaya is an emancipated heroine who tries to liberate herself breaking the silence after seventeen long years of her marriage but she does not try to revolt rather being in the family relations she set herself to bring an equal partnership in marriage. In the same way Sumi in A Matter of Time is an emancipated lady who undertakes her journey to liberation after she is deserted by her husband Gopal after twenty three years of married life. Whereas Sarita is a doctor, Indu is a journalist, Jaya is a writer and columnist, Sumi is a house wife whose catastrophe begins when she comes to face the reality that her husband has left her alone.

Shashi Deshpande uses epigraph in almost every novel of hers. She is a master of the narrative form and as such knows that using epigraph makes the inevitable impending action in her novels makes known to her readers. The epigraph hints at the action which is going to occur in the novel. It’s a craft using the right sentences or poetic lines for epigraph as it must be hitting at the right line of thought. Like her earlier novels she uses epigraph in this novel and this time from
Brhad-aranyaka Upanishad which presents the scene of the sage Yajnavalkya informing Maitreyi:

‘Maitreyi,’ said Yajnavalkya, ‘verily I am about to go forth from this state (of householder).’

The epigraph indicates the central action of the novel. Like the sage Yajnavalkya, the character Gopal decides to renounce his family. But the contrast is obviously marked as in the case of sage Yajnavalkya it is ‘sanyasa’ as was the practice in those days to seek it after relishing life of ‘Grahsta’-house holder ship but in Gopal’s case it is a withdrawal from his duties due to fear and pain of worldly ties. In Brhad-aranyaka Upanishad (II.4.1) there is a reference of the sage informing his renunciation from the world of flesh and blood. The same sentiment has been expressed by N. Poovalingam:

…the perception …that Gopal’s desertion of his family signifies Vedic renunciation…is not entirely convincing…Gopal abandoning the family is not the result of saturation in the worldly life. He is more a withdrawal in pain than a renunciation due to contentment. Moreover, Gopal’s life has nothing to offer in lines corresponding to the older Vedic stages of a man’s life… His predicament is more akin to the existentialist’s.¹

She has depicted what happens when a husband leaves the family in lurch and how a woman has to fend for not only herself but her children too. This present novel is a study of female liberation as it captures the journey of a female protagonist Sumi to her liberation. Concerned more with her own life and the process of moving on, she does not fritter away her time when she is stranded alone with her three daughters: Aru, Charu and Seema rather she displays oodles of courage and fortitude and astonishes every one with her newly gathered and latent sense of heroism with which she strives hard in her life and carves a niche for herself in the professional front as well besides accomplishing other tasks like paying for her daughters’ fee and fulfilling their demands.

Gopal, Sumi’s husband, evade his liabilities as a husband and father of three daughters by very practically walking out on his wife and three daughters who at this time need him badly. It is not only a matter of finances though even that cannot be ruled out as the financial back up is very
significant as they are in their formative years and it is the time the children must be provided with all facilities hence they are in dire need of financial support, but also the emotional support. But Gopal escapes all this by just announcing that he will not be able to continue the role of a husband and father. His case is very strange as, “In a culture where marriage, to many, is the be-all and end all of existence, where responsibilities outweigh desires, this expression to free of all bondage in itself is strange and different to say the least.”  

Gopal takes it for granted to announce the catastrophe for Sumi. It is a trivial matter for him to say so as he does not take him much time. The narrator remarks in this context, “The telling of what he has come to say takes him so little time that when he has done, the song is still going on. He looks at her for a reaction, but she is gazing at him just as expectantly, waiting for him to go on.”  

He waits for Sumi’s reaction for some time. But seeing that there is no response he does not feel the need of being there and walks away. In fact Sumi is taken aback and is so dumb founded that she does not know what she must say. Sumi is shocked; appalled to such an extent that the earth before her feet has slipped away. Gopal has put an end to their 23 years long relationship and she has been fated to be alone at the age of forty years. Keerthi Ramachandra says in this regard:

One evening, while Sumi is watching a film on T.V. about circus, “without the dirt, the smells, the fear and despair of the real thing, but sanitized, bacteria free” Gopal tells her he wants to talk to her. And without any preamble says what he has to. He waits for Sumi’s reaction, but within moments both realize that there’s nothing more to be said and he leaves as quietly as he has entered.

Sumi’s mind keeps haunting on the various interpretations of the song: *Jeena yahan, Marna Yahan, Iske siwa jana kahan* (You have to live here and die here. There is no other place to go) being played which is an indication of her mental imbalance. She thinks of the umpteen interpretations of the song. The song reminds her of her own life and the purpose of it if any. Perhaps the song announces her tragic life and its predicament. Her inner confusion thus comes to the forefront, “Her mind slides from one clarification to another, over and over again, until in sheer exhaustion she falls asleep.”  

It is the solemn atmosphere all around. The clown in the movie is a tragic character who dies in the end, an analogy with Sumi herself as Sumi too meets the same end. Gopal’s walking out is to
ring a death signal for her. The tragedy of her life; the circus has begun wherein she herself is the pivotal clown; prancing here and there. The clown actually represents her own life. She is being made to dance according to whims of her husband. Human beings are not mere than clowns in the circus of life. Their actions are comic. Now another command and she has to comply. Consequently she does so. She is numb to a greater extent that she remains too stupefied to question him further and silently drops herself to sleep.

She has a hunch of the impending danger when Gopal had come to announce his final decision as, “And then, suddenly she has a feeling as if someone has nudged her, telling her that something unpleasant is approaching, that he should get up and walk away.” (AMOT 8) But she does not get up and move away rather, “…she sits and listens in silence to what he has to say to her.” (AMOT 8) Later on her mind keeps musing if she had gone away before his proclaiming what he wanted to, perhaps she would not have faced the stain of being a deserted wife in society. But these musings are of no use and as such she lets the bygones be bygones.

Next morning she vomits out to her daughter about the things happened last night. She seems calm. She does not show any expression of calamity as nothing has happened. She accepts the finality bravely. She knows to the best of her knowledge the state of all affairs and has no confusion, “Her mind is crystal clear, she knows what has happened.” (AMOT 9) The narrator remarks, “She answers all their questions with infinite patience, she listens to their repeated exclamations with what looks like composure; there are no signs of irritation or annoyance.” (AMOT 10) Sumi suffers the inner pain due to her husband but pretends as if everything is normal; as if nothing has happened. She actually makes faces and lives a life of sheer pretence so that her daughters may not confront the reality of Gopal’s desertion. She does not want that her daughters should give in to the utter shock. But from the inner heart she suffers from deep silence and pain. She has a different look, “despite her facade of normality, has a quality about her—a kind of blankness—that makes them uneasy.” (AMOT 10-11) Siddhartha Sharma remarks, “She is so shocked with Gopal’s action that she lapses into complete silence, trying simultaneously to keep things normal for her daughters.” 5 Though externally she seems to be unruffled but internally she is suffering a lot which puts a huge effect on her body and soul. “With Gopal’s going, it was as if the swift-flowing stream of her being had grown thick and
viscous—her movement, her thoughts, her very pulse, and heartbeats seemed to have slowed down.” (AMOT 28)

*A Matter of Time* is not about only Sumi or Gopal, it covers the life of four generations of women. Manorama belongs to the first generation is dead but her presence is always felt, Kalyani is of second generation, Sumi belongs to the third generation and Aru is of fourth generation. Manorama was the daughter of a poor man and was married in a very elite family. It was no less than a miracle as generally it is not seen in the society that a very rich man marries a woman from a very humble and modest family economically. The narrator quotes Kalyani and Goda having a conversation about their marriage:

> The two women speak of the marriage as a miracle. What else, they seem to imply, can explain this marriage between the daughter of a poor village Brahmin, who often had nothing more than the coin with which he tucked in the extra length of his dhoti, and the educated intelligent son of a well-to-do man from Bangalore? (AMOT 118)

Manorama’s mother sent her for education to the school run by Yamunabai despite the fact, “Yamunabai and most of her students were not Brahmins.” (AMOT 119) After her marriage she broke all the relationships with her family. The fact, “...her mother died just a year after her marriage made it easier perhaps for her to distance herself from them.” (AMOT 120) The need for a male child is very well presented in this novel too as Deshpande has done in her earlier novel. Manorama and Vithalrao both wanted a male child. Manorama was tormented in her heart that if she failed to give birth to a male child then in that case her husband would marry another woman. The fear is always intact in the Indian women as they fear if they are unable to bear a male child, their life will turn hellish.

Manorama always preferred a boy as most of the Indian women want. But she could not bear a son rather she bore a daughter whom she named Kalyani. Manorama desired Kalyani to well groom herself but she failed her badly. “Manorama wanted a son; instead there was Kalyani. Not an unloved child, no never that. But for Manorama, she became the visible symbol of their failure to have a son.” (AMOT 150-151) Manorama chose her own brother Shripati for Kalyani as husband so that she might save the family property that Kalyani would inherit to go to any other one outside their family. Kalyani had to accept her uncle as husband. After this all
Manorama, “Perhaps, after this, Manorama felt secure. The property would remain in the family now. Her family.” (AMOT 129)

Manorama and Kalyani shared a relationship which speaks of tension and friction. Only once when Kalyani actually bore a male child that the rift subdued but soon after the son was lost and Shripati went missing because he was so tense after his son’s getting lost which forced Kalyani to come back to Manorama as a rejected wife who has been deserted by her own husband. The disgrace was too much for Manorama. The treatment that Manorama gave to Kalyani brought her in complete objection with her own husband Vithalrao who did not want this to happen. “Kalyani destroyed all this. When she returned home, a deserted wife, and, as Manorama saw it, a disgrace to the family, Manorama gave up everything, she never took part in any public activities again.” (AMOT 154)

Soon afterwards Vithalrao suffered from a stroke. Even during the days of Vithalrao’s ill health Kalyani was not allowed to come near him. Manorama wanted, “..to punish her by keeping her away from her father,” (AMOT 152) as she believed it is because of the disgrace which is clung to Kalyani’s face that has killed Vithalrao. But Kalyani still nurtured him: “But Kalyani was never embarrassed by his tears. She gently wiped them away as if he was a younger sibling, patted his hand and sat silently by his side until he recovered.” (AMOT 152) Manorama always misunderstood Kalyani. The fact that Vithalrao felt comfortable with her during the days of his ill health, made her angry. She could not tolerate that she was so happy with her company. Even when Vithalrao died, Kalyani was blamed. The fact was that Vithalrao was unable to breathe and was saying something which Kalyani interpreted as, “Put me down.” (AMOT 152) He wanted himself to be laid down on the ground. Accordingly Kalyani did and he died peacefully but Manorama blamed her for Vithalrao’s death. She blamed, “You are my enemy, you were born to make my life miserable.” (AMOT 153) But the fact was that Manorama did not want Vithalrao to be laid on the ground as she did not want herself to be seen as a widow. It is being the wife of Vithalrao is what gave her sole identity and security. Manorama knew it that Vithalrao’s mumbling something meant what Kalyani got to know what she still wanted his death to come as late as possible. The seamy side of mother daughter relationship is well pointed out. Being realist Shashi Deshpande paints the reality of it in the light of Indian context.
Sumi’s parents, Shripati and Kalyani, share a very complex relationship. It is very shocking. Sumi lays her hands on a marriage picture of her parents. The harshness and cruelty which is very peculiar of his character is hinted in the marriage picture. The marriage poster of Kalyani and Shripati is described as:

The man on the other hand is stern, his eyes hooded, arms folded across his chest in the usual ‘manly pose’ demanded by the photographers for such pictures. But the sternness here is not a pose, it is real. And the way he is standing, he gives the impression of being by himself, wholly unaware of the girl sitting by him. His wife. (AMOT 26)

Sumi is perplexed at the thought of their being together even in the picture as she has never seen them together. It is a revolting idea to see her parents together: “Kalyani and Shripati, my parents. To see them together, even in a picture, gives me an odd, uneasy feeling. It seems wrong somehow, unnatural, even slightly obscene.” (AMOT 26) Kalyani had two daughters and a son. Her son is mentally retarded. While coming back from Bangalore Kalyani loses her son at V.T station. Shripati’s anger knows no bounds when he realises the enormity of the situation. He runs helter-skelter in order to seek the information regarding the child but he is unable to search him. He searches the boy consecutively for two months. He leaves no stone unturned to find him. He goes from pillar to post searching for the child “like a madman” (AMOT 140) He tries to locate him everywhere wherever he has an iota of hope. He is dejected as his efforts ended in smoke and, “he never found him.” (AMOT 140)

The birth of a son is matter of celebration. This yearning for a male child is in plethora in the psyche of Manorama, Vithalrao and even Shripati. Sumi believes that the reason for their being is the longing for a male child. Sumi has observed the celebrations at Nikhil’s birth. Sumi reflects that it was Goda who “sang the song at Nikhil’s naming ceremony, a song full of joy.”(AMOT 71) She thinks that this joy must be same everywhere in the world wherever a son is born, “It must have been this way in the stable in Bethlehem, in Nanda’s house on the banks of the Yamuna in Gokul.” (AMOT 71)

What befalls Kalyani is really very astonishing. Shripati is mad at her. He is so mad that he does not speak to Kalyani. He remains in the claustrophobic space of his room upstairs. For the next thirty seven years he does not have any communion with her. The novel presents the Indian
psyche very realistically with its preference for a male child. Deshpande’s quote from Upanishad sums up the Indian psyche:

Whatever wrong has been done by him,
His sons frees him from it all;
Therefore he is called a son. By his son
A father stands firm in this world.

_Brahad-Aranyaka Upanishad_ (1.5.17)

Imagination fails if one starts imagining how he can do so. Stopping all communication with one’s wife seems incredible. It is really a great amount of time. Kalyani is a victim she has to tolerate the trials without any fault of hers. Shripati fails to understand that not only Shripati alone but even Kalyani too has lost her son so the trauma of losing their son is as shocking to Kalyani as it is to Shripati. Aru notices the oppressive silence that exists between her grandparents:

Why doesn’t Baba ever come down? Why doesn’t he have his meals with the rest of us? Why does he ever speak to Kalyani, she is his wife, isn’t it? And why is she so frightened of him? He rings the bell and she responds, he controls her from a distance. What has Amma done to make him behave this way towards her? (AMOT 39)

Premi tells Gopal that her father Shripati has chosen very subtle ways to punish her mother Kalyani. He deliberately sent Premi to Bombay to pursue a career in medicine so that he can distance Kalyani from her in order to give her mental pain. After Sumi’s marriage with Gopal it happened as if, “I think he wanted to tell Amma-you let Sumi get away, so you can’t have your other daughter, either.” (AMOT 132) How mean can a man be? It is very shocking that he can choose such things to hurt his wife. Gopal seems astonished as he does not seem to trust what she says but Premi even is confident that she believes what she says, “I can believe anything about him.” (AMOT 132)

Shripati’s mentioning Kalyani as Manorama and Vithalrao’s daughter in his will informs the readers that the preference for a male child is so deep rooted in him. It is so ingrained in him that he victimises Kalyani to such an extent that he can never fully comprehend. If one counts the losses that Kalyani has incurred, the list would never end. She has been denied the physical love
and intimacy that she deserved. She missed the touch of his body over her. There is only a semblance of marriage bond without its sanctity and love. Sumi thinks of this intimacy that her mother has lost, “the feel of his body against yours, the warmth of his breath on your face, the touch of his lips on your, his hands on your breasts? Kalyani lost all this (had she ever had them)?” (AMOT 167)

Shripati has strange relationship with his daughters too. He did not talk to Premi for a long span of her life. He talked to her when she completed her medical finals. It is shocking to see such a terrible man with such preference for a son that he could almost obliterate the image and existence of her daughters to such a great extent as if they never existed. Premi reflects: “The first time he talked to her was when she had completed her medical finals; he had called her up to his room then, summoned actually, to tell her she would be marrying Anil.” (AMOT 18)

Kalyani, Sumi and Aru are the direct victims of patriarchy. Sumi after Gopal’s desertion awakens to a new identity. She moves on from being a lazy person spending her time doing nothing at home to a woman whose sole aim in life becomes to excel in her life and being independent. Aru, the fourth generation, is constantly trying hard to come to terms with reality. The shock is too much for her but overcoming her shock, she seeks to establish justice in the society. Despite the fact that her attempts of getting justice in the society fails as the court can only provide divorce or maintenance but what Aru tries for is that of a daughter’s right to her father’s love and care which is basically impractical in the society but as an issue is quite relevant.

As far as Sumi is concerned, after Gopal’s desertion her father Shripati gives a sudden visit to their house and takes them all to his house, the Big House. Sumi’s mother Kalyani feels astonished to see them. Seema reveals the secret to her by narrating the state of affairs. Kalyani, started weeping after listening from her about Gopal’s desertion, and utters in agony, “no, my God, not again.”(AMOT 12) Kalyani very well knows the meaning of desertion as she has been sailing in the same boat. She knows the hardships, trials and tribulations of being a deserted wife. Seema’s revelation brings rants in the self imposed composure that Sumi has pretentiously worn and, “Suddenly, the dam that Sumi had built with her silence gives way and they are submerged in the awareness of loss.” (AMOT 12)
Sumi bears everything with silence and does not bother to ask her husband Gopal the reasons which propelled him for desertion. Even she does not make efforts to locate his whereabouts. She even does not want to discuss on the topic of Gopal as she says “…what do I say…That my husband has left me and I don’t know why and maybe he doesn’t really know, either? And that I’m angry and humiliated and confused…? Let that be, we won’t go into it now.” (AMOT 107) She is not concerned whether he is alive or dead as she is quite confident that he must be hale and hearty. The daughters want to locate him and look out for him. There are several things that haunt their minds which might be the plausible causes for their father’s action. They even plan to get him placed in an advertisement of missing persons but later drop the idea. They are enveloped by a sense of complete wilderness, a sense of being lost. Charu announces, “There is really nothing we can do.” (AMOT 13) To the daughters, to Sumi and to the family on the whole, Gopal’s act is, “it is both a shame and disgrace.” (AMOT 13) The family finds itself lost. The daughters suffer the pangs of pain of their fatherly love and care. They find it really complex issue how a father can leave them who loves them so much?

Aru calls her aunt Premi who is Sumi’s sister to their aid so that she may find out the reason for Gopal’s walking out on them and persuade her sister Sumi to search Gopal in order to bring reconciliation between them. Sumi does not open her heart with her too. To Premi she remains a riddle as enigmatic as she has been to her daughters. Premi discusses with Sumi’s daughters the feasible clues about Gopal’s desertion. The narrator points out the feasible reasons for his deserting them which they discuss:

Quarrels? Money? Is it because of what happened in the Department? His resignation was a hint that Gopal was not in a very normal frame of mind. No man gives up a University teaching job just like that! Perhaps the attack on him by his students threw him- here Premi hesitates, for these are Gopal’s daughters-off balance? (AMOT 16)

Premi even further doubts, “...Is there any other woman?” (AMOT 16) But these doubts do not seem substantial to her daughters. Unable to find out any answer they keep wondering whether it is the fate of women to suffer; a word ‘fate’ which Kalyani throws in the midst of them. Their marriage was a love marriage not an arranged one but like other love marriages it was not hasty but was a well calculated decision. But they find no solid reason for his walking out on them.
Even when Premi approaches Sumi, she is nonplussed to get her response: “Why have you come?” (AMOT 15) There is no hint of anything that Premis is able to elicit from her. Sumi remains an unsolved mystery for her parents, daughters, cousins and sister: “She accepts Gopal’s dumb sympathy, Devaki’s fierce loyalty, and Ramesh’s stupefied bewilderment, as if they are all same to her.” (AMOT 20) Premi leaves for her own house realising there would be no use staying in The Big House as she cannot be a good help to Aru and the others. Premi tells Aru, “I can do. If we knew where Gopal was, perhaps, but…you’ll call me, Aru, won’t you, when you find out where he is?” (AMOT 19) Shashi Deshpande says:

Sumi’s acceptance is not passive. She blocks out the unpleasantness. She has a good opinion of herself; she is more concerned with getting on with life. She does not want pity; she would do anything for pride. She distances even her husband. The point is, they are both unusual people. People are puzzled by the abandoned wife not feeling bad. 6

She does not want to present to the world her miseries and troubles. She does not want to spill the beans of her problems to Gopal or any other member of her family. She wants to move ahead in life without any hindrance. She proves herself a true and emancipated woman better than the earlier heroines of Shashi Deshpande like Indu, Sarita and Jaya who find marriage as a factor of security and thus cling back to it though by asserting their individuality but Sumi is unlike them. She does not want to go after Goapl searching for him and crying his name. She wants: “The picture she presents to the world is one of grace and courage, to be admired rather than pitted. Unchanged, except for a feeling-which only those who know her well are aware of-of something missing in her.” (AMOT 172) It is like Sumi is aware of the situation that is no use showing your troubles to the people, “She fully realises that tying a lacerated heart to one’s wrist and showing it to the world is meaningless.” 7

Ironically enough their father Shripati does not partake in any conversation. Neither he consoles Sumi, nor he mention Gopal’s name. He does not indulge in any sympathy with Sumi. He does not mention what Gopal has done to her. He asked Premi about her family when she is called for help for the family but does not talk about Gopal. He cannot do so as he has previously done the same thing to his own wife and daughters. As Premi thinks, “Of course he cannot speak of
Gopal. To mention Gopal, to speak of what he has done, is to let down the drawbridge into his own past.” (AMOT 19)

But their eldest daughter Aru is very disappointed with her mother Sumi’s matter of fact behaviour. She in some corner of her heart believes that it is her own mother who is accountable of whole sad state of affairs in their life. Aru accuses her mother Sumi for her complacent behaviour. Aru cannot take it easily that her mother can be so uncaring, so unperturbed, and so calm as if their life has been normal, as if no storm of chaos has hit them hard and ripped them apart. She cannot grasp the silence and composure with which Sumi keeps on moving in her life. She is confounded as to why Sumi is nonchalant as nothing really has happened; as if she does not care a fig whether he is in her life or not:

You don’t care about his having gone, you don’t care where he is, you don’t care what people think-but I care, yes, I do, I care about Papa having left us, I care about not having our own house. I don’t want to live like this, as if we’re sitting on a railway platform, I want my home back, I want my father back. (AMOT 21)

Sumi does not want to be occupied with people. She prefers to stay aloof as she knows she has to get used to the life of being lonely; waging her own war against the world. She reflects, “It takes time to get used to sharing your life with another person, now I have to get used to being alone.” (AMOT 23) She feels lonely deep inside. But her actual enemy which is brewing inside her is not loneliness, “it is a sense of alienation.” (AMOT 23) She feels as if she has been sallied with so many questions regarding Gopal’s desertion and that makes her quite uncomfortable. She is torn inside into her and her minds turns upside down in order to find clues to her fault in pushing Gopal out the nuptial ties. Her daughters and her sister Premi impose blame on her in piles. She is doubtful whether she is the one who is to be held accountable: “The three of them ranged against me. Am I the enemy? Do my daughters blame me for what Gopal has done? Do they think it is my fault?” (AMOT 23)

Sumi knows that her daughters hold her responsible for what has happened. She knows pretty well that she did not ask Gopal any questions regarding why he chose such a path and left them in lurch. And this thing has made her all the more a culprit in the eyes of each and every one. Normally a wife does not let her husband go like that so easily without even creating a scene. No one believes that Gopal has gone out without any reason. But Sumi has divergent views. She
knows Gopal after all she has lived with him more than twenty three years. She is of the strong opinion that even if she had asked him the reason for his desertion, there would not have been any use of that. Gopal must have supplied her any practical answer. For her it is not significant why he has done so rather she is concerned with the final crisis what has already taken place. Sumi thinks that, “the reason lies inside him, the reason is him.” (AMOT 24) She very well knows that Gopal cannot handle the family responsibilities and is also afraid of carrying it. Gopal believes, “Marriage is not for everyone. The demands it makes—life time of commitment—is not possible for all of us.” (AMOT 69) Sumi remembers the night when she had gone to Gopal’s room who was their tenant in The Big House at that time. It was the same day they decided they would marry. But at that time Gopal had candidly told her that their marriage would not be very complicated one. She remembers what Gopal has said, “…if either of us wanted to be free, the other would let go. We are not going to be tied together…No handcuffs...” (AMOT 221) Sumi does not question him but she wishes to ask him one question which she never asks:

...If I meet Gopal I will ask him one question, just one, the question no one has thought of. What is it, Gopal, I will ask him, that makes a man in this age of acquisition and possession walk out on his family and all that he owns? Because...it was you who said that we are shaped by the age we live in, by the society we are part of. How then can you, in this age, a part of society, turn your back on everything in your life? Will you be able to give me an answer to this? (AMOT 27)

Gopal has once after their marriage discussed about the concept of ‘Sa-hriday’ which means two bodies and one soul; the concept of marriage which Hinduism and Indian Vedantic philosophy talks about. But he does not believe in it as he tells her that it is impractical and impossible for two hearts to throb in perfect unison. He believes, “Sa-hriday in the sense of oneness is an impossible concept.” (AMOT 24) In English language there is no word that captures the concept properly as it is a practical and matter of fact language. Sumi knows it from very beginning from these hints of his unexpected behaviour, “…it was always there in Gopal, the potential to walk out on her and their children.” (AMOT 24) Sumi believes even if she had asked him why he deserted her, it would not have helped her in any way:
I know they find it impossible to believe that I have not asked him anything. The truth is, I could not have spoken to him that night-no, it was impossible. But even if it had been possible, if I had asked him ‘why’, would I have got an answer I could have made sense of? (AMOT 27)

After a month of his deserting them, Sumi decides to vacate their house in which they have lived with Gopal as it is of no use paying for the rent when they have no hope that their life would again be settled on the right track. Aru finds her decision a bit shocking as the house is a sign of their family and the time it is intact it represents some hope of her father’s coming back. But with the vacating of the house, an iota of hope that they have is drowned in the deep ocean. But Sumi is quite enthusiastic in vacating it as her spirit which has been very down as if, “…the swift-flowing stream of her being had grown thick and viscous-her movements, her thoughts, her very pulse and heartbeats seemed to have slowed down,” (AMOT 28) she needs to revive her spirits. She is like a stunned bird, “a bird coming back to life, there is a frenzy of movement, a tremendous flurry of activity, a frenetic shaking of feathers.” (AMOT 28) At home Sumi works as if she has been possessed. The narrator informs,

The girls fall asleep on the bare mattresses on the floor, exhausted, but Sumi has reached the stage of extreme fatigue in which it seems impossible that she can ever sleep. She feels charged with a kind of energy that makes her think she could go on working all night; her hands itch to pull the mattresses from under the girls, to roll them up and pile them on the stuff in the hall. If the truck was here, she thinks, I would have carried out everything and loaded it myself. (AMOT 29-30)

There are no feelings of sadness and frustration. She feels as if she has acquired new powers. She puts forward first step of her liberation with vacating of house. She orders her daughters not to carry anything which is of no use. They pick up all the clutter; bags, bottles and newspapers and stack them at one place to be disposed of. In a way she severs her ties with the house. She has been very much cruel and ruthless, “…anything that is of no possible use is discarded.” (AMOT 29)

As of Gopal his whereabouts are soon located. He has been residing with his student Shankar who runs a press. Shankar tells him about his sister Sudha’s son Ramesh who has enquired about him and finally searched him. Gopal now expects a flurry of visitors soon. He expects Ramesh to
He turns up any time to him. He thinks of numerous things that he has to tell them regarding why he has to adopt such a path. He observes that, “I heard a voice… No, I can’t say that, it sounds utterly phoney. Even Joan of Arc didn’t get away with that one… It’s a kind of illness, a virus, perhaps, which makes me incapable of functioning as a full human being, as a husband and father…I thought of purandaradasa’s line, ‘Listen, the hour strikes’ and I was terrified, I knew I was running out of time…I stopped believing in the life I was leading, suddenly it seemed unreal and I knew I could not go on.” (AMOT 41)

Gopal acknowledges the fact that he has wronged Sumi. Gopal seems to be suffering from loneliness at heart which has compelled him to take such a decision. He nowhere blames Sumi or his daughters for the decision he has made. Gopal feels indebted to Sumi for she had let him go without imposing several questions. Otherwise he would have felt the prick of his conscience after voicing half-truths. It is not however Ramesh as he has expected but Kalyani who visits him first of all. She implores him, “What have you done to my daughter, Gopala, don’t do this. Don’t let it happen to my daughter, what happened to me.” (AMOT 46) She asks him if anyone has poisoned him against Sumi. She tells him that Sumi’s friendship with others especially males does not mean any wrong conduct on her part. But Gopal tells her:

Once again he tries to tell her that he has nothing against Sumi, he tries to convince her that he never expected her to create for him the world he wanted, that he did not make her responsible for giving him all that he wanted in life…He tells her that this has nothing to do with the relationship between Sumi and him, it has nothing to do with Sumi, she has done nothing wrong, she has done him no wrong, on the contrary, it is he…. (AMOT 47)

The second visitor to Gopal is Aru who has been blaming her mother for his father’s desertion but she soon knows the reality. She visits her father Gopal and comes to know the truth. She asks him the reasons for his action but gets nothing in response, “But it’s no use, he cannot give her what she wants, what she has come here for. When she gets up to go, they have both of them the same sense of failure, they are equally exhausted.” (AMOT 50) She exhorts her mother for seeking divorce. She says, “I think you should see a lawyer.” (AMOT 60) but Sumi abruptly rejects the idea as she does not see any reason in getting a divorce, “What? Get a divorce? I’m not interested.” (AMOT 61) Sumi does not want divorce from his husband as she thinks that it is
a social stigma and moreover society will not accept it. She thinks taking divorce will give birth to number of problems which she herself has to bear. She also thinks that it will weaken her socially, emotionally and mentally. In this context it is worthwhile to note down:

Divorce frees a woman legally but the memories attached to the marriage cannot be erased easily. The social stigmas associated with divorce in the Indian society haunt her and she has to continue to struggle and suffer at various levels—economical, emotional and psychological. A woman may get relief from the painful life of a wrong marriage through divorce, but it will not always re-establish her socially, psychologically or financially.\(^8\)

So instead of taking divorce from his partner, she prefers to move in her life like that. Aru wants to get family maintenance but Sumi disagrees with her on this matter. Aru wants that he should be taught a lesson. He should be dragged into the court as he must be made to realise what he has done. But Sumi is not interested and replies, “How? By punishing him? Do you want to punish him, Aru? I don’t. I’m not interested. I just want to get on with my life…Let him go, Aru, just let him go.” (AMOT 61)

The first time Sumi visits him is when she was coming back after searching for a house. She enters flippantly into Shankar’s press and meets him. She feels the need of explaining, “I was passing by. I saw the board and came in.” (AMOT 82) The way she is compelled to explain the reason of her visit shows that she is so nonchalant that she does not ask him anything. A deserted wife would never behave like the way Sumi does as she has no reason to justify the visit; the reason is so strong why the man does what he has done. They do not break the ice: “A burden of unsaid things lies between them, but neither is able to speak of these; they suddenly seem irrelevant. Yet they have to talk, for silence is even more dangerous, more treacherous.” (AMOT 83) Sumi realises in Gopal’s room after meeting him that their reunion is a distant dream; a kind of utopian scheme that Aru is thinking of which would never be realised: We can never be together again.

All these days I have been thinking of him as if he has been suspended in space, in nothingness, since he left us. But he has gone on living, his life has moved on, it will go on without me. So has mine. Our lives have diverged, they now move separately, two different streams. (AMOT 85)
It is the predicament of Indian women that they even after being victimised in marriage do not want to break loose their nuptial ties and in this context she is quite representative of Indian psychology. Kalyani moans the repetition of history——“My father died worrying about me, my mother could not die in peace, she held on to life though she was suffering, she suffered terribly – because of me, she didn’t want to leave me and go.” (AMOT 47) Kalyani tells Gopal “what have you done to my daughter, Gopal don’t do this, don’t let it happen to my daughter.” (AMOT 46)

His sense of estrangement and non-belongingness may be the main reason for Gopal’s desertion. This is the very reason of Gopal’s desertion which takes him to such an extent that he leaves his wife and family in search of happiness thinking wrongly that the happiness lives somewhere else. The same sentiments have been voiced by Prasanna Sree when she highlights: “The existential alienation which Gopal experiences can be offered as one of the most possible reasons for his transformation leading to his inexplicable desertion of the family...Perhaps his insecure childhood, his lack of understanding on the true concept of happiness and ignorance of the true quality of joy could have promoted Gopal to renounce his grihastashrama, and go in pursuit of the eternal bliss.”

Gopal was unable to digest the fact that his father married his own brother’s wife and he was born of this alliance. From the very beginning his mind has been baffled to think about the reasons of his father’s marrying his brother’s widow. The first thing that comes to his mind is Gopal’s words, “A man who sinned against his brother by loving his wife. The brother dying of grief and the wife and the man marrying immediately after.” (AMOT 42) The second interpretation that disturbs him is, “A kind man moved by pity to marry his brother’s widow, to make that brother’s daughter his own.” (AMOT 42) He all of a sudden remembers having read Hamlet by William Shakespeare and starts relating himself with Shakespeare’s hero Hamlet whose father is murdered by his uncle Claudius and then he marries his brother’s wife and becomes the king of Denmark. It proves to be the most terrible part of the story.

It was when I read Hamlet, fortunately much later, that the most terrible version of my parents’ story entered my mind. Just that once, though, I slammed the door on it immediately. In this story my father became a man succumbing to his passion for his brother’s wife, the woman compliant, a pregnancy and a child to
come and then after the husband’s convenient death (no, I couldn’t make my father poison his brother) a marriage of convenience. (*AMOT* 43)

But even this interpretation is insubstantial as he was born after two months of his parents’ marriage. So there is no possibility of any pregnancy before their marriage which might have motivated his brother to kill his own brother and get married to his brother’s widow. But the fact remains that the remembrance of his father being guilty keeps on haunting him day and night throughout his life. It is further discovered that Sudha and he himself do not belong to the same father. Sudha is the daughter of her father’s elder brother whose wife his father eventually married after elder brother’s death. He was completely shattered into pieces when he comes to know about the fact that his sister Sudha was born to his uncle. He is left all alone and this feeling of loneliness haunts him. On being questioned by Premi regarding the reason of his desertion he says, “I can give you so many answers, but I’ve begun thinking that the plain truth is that I just got tired.” (*AMOT* 133) He observes:

> You remember the Yaksha’s question to Yudhishtira: what is the greatest wonder in this world? And what Yudhishtira’s answer was? We see people die and yet we go on as if we are going to live forever. Yes, it’s true, that is the greatest marvel this world holds, it’s the miracle. In fact, it’s the secret of life itself. We know it’s all there, the pain and suffering, old age, loneliness and death, but we think, somehow we believe that it’s not for us. The day we stop believing in this untruth, the day we face the truth that we too are mortal, that this is our fate as well, it will become difficult, almost impossible to go on…It happened to me. I stopped believing. The miracle failed for me. (*AMOT* 133-134)

Premi requests Gopal to change his stance and come back to Sumi and resume his life again. But he seems to be resolute with his dogged determination not to return back to the family life. Premi is quite scared about the future of Sumi as well as of the three daughters of Sumi and Gopal. It is quite astonishing that the relatives have sense and they can perceive the difficulties that the daughters will have to grapple with but the man their father cannot foresee those impending dangers. Premi advises him again and again: Don’t do this to your girls, Gopal. And Sumi’s just forty she has a long way to go.” (*AMOT* 135) Premi is enveloped in the ocean of great pain and grief. She finds Gopal’s answers incongruous. She cannot comprehend his stand and the reasons
which propelled him to be such a ruthless husband and father who could leave them all in the lurch by landing himself safely on the land. On being asked by Aru what Gopal said about the reasons of deserting them all, she tells Aru that, “Some things that make sense, a lot that don’t. I’m wondering whether I asked him the right questions?” (AMOT 137) She announces, “We’re a cursed family…I’m frightened for our children.” (AMOT 137)

Marriage is an institution which makes men wild and wanton. Aru is pinched to see that contrary to the held view that marriage is a unifying bond that strengthens the bond between two bodies is awakened to the fact that marriage has no utility. She has been a witness to the marriages of her parents and that of her grandparents. The two marriage are quite failures. Her grandparents despite the fact of their living under the same house do not share any bond of love and their parents have also disintegrated their ways which is a great loss for the children who miss their father’s love all the more. Aru questions Premi, “I’ve been thinking about marriage a great deal…What’s there in it? I mean look at Amma and now Sumi…What do you get out of it?” (AMOT 138)

Generally it is said that every misfortune brings in its train some distant hope; a sort of fortune; a blessing in disguise. Similarly it so happens with Sumi. This stint that she has been wading through proves a blessing in disguise for her. She wants to move forward in her life. She is intent on enjoying her life, “…she decides to learn to ride the scooter” (AMOT 33) as well. She is helped in this new venture by the next door tenant Prasad and then Aru. One day, “Sumi suddenly gathers speed and in a burst of confidence, goes out of the gate.” (AMOT 34) The desire to learn scooter displays her first step to move in her life; moving essentially towards the one end of life i.e. freedom. Even gradually Sumi embarks on a new venture of finding a job. She does not want that she should be a parasite on her parents thriving lazily on them. She starts up teaching as a school teacher. She writes a play “The Gardener’s Son” and feels happy at its success. “It feels so good and now suddenly I want to do so many things.” (AMOT 231) She wants to be a good mother to Aru and hopes “I want her to enjoy the good things in life; I want her to taste life, I want her to relish it and not spit it out because, she finds it bitter.” (AMOT 220) That is why she starts searching for a new rented accommodation. She is scared that her daughters are getting aware to the strange relationship existing between her parents.
What Sumi likes even less is that Aru is becoming conscious of the situation in the house, of the queer relationship between her grandparents. Sumi has never spoken to her daughters about this, but now, living in the house, amidst of it, there is no getting away from it. Things have changed since Sumi’s childhood, Shripati is not the same to his granddaughters as he was to his own daughters, yet the oppression of his unseen self cannot but make itself felt. In this atmosphere, how can any of them, Aru especially, forget what Gopal has done…(AMOT 60)

She wants that she must along with her daughters live apart as she does not want that the relationship between her parents should disturb the peace of mind of the daughters. In this context it can be pinpointed:

The communication gap between them impinges on the wider issues of patriarchy that influences the successive generations. Their mute relation to each other for thirty five years compel for a deliberate consideration and the mystery of this long silence is unravelled, a horrifying story of loss and pain is laid bale-a story that seems to be repeating itself in Sumi’s life.¹⁰

She does not want to give the kind of life to her daughters which she and Premi had led in the house. They lived observing the code of conduct of the house. She observers very clearly how: “…her daughters unconsciously, unknowingly, lowering their voices to the exact decibel required to keep them from being heard by their grandfather upstairs…I don’t want my daughters to live with a hand clasped over their mouths, like Premi and I had to.” (AMOT 59) She earnestly looks out for the house but eventually she has to drop the idea because of the financial reasons.

Women are socialised in such a way that a shame about their sex clings to them which becomes an inseparable part of their very existence. The monthly periods are treated not as a biological factor but as something which is impure. One of the examples of their weak position is the way parents deal with them when they had periods. Kalyani was meted out very bad treatment during those days. Kalyani informs: “We had to sit out three whole days, we couldn’t touch anything…But my mother wanted us to staying apart ritual. And so, on those three day we sat apart, Goda and I, all day,…we couldn’t sit on the sofas, of course, and we didn’t eat with the others.” (AMOT 159-160) She was given food as if she is an outcast. She was not allowed to touch anything as it would defile the sanctity of everything. People like Manoroma are so
traditional that they reject to accept the truth that menses are not something to be ashamed of rather it is a biological function as Kalyani’s father opined, “it’s not dirty.” (AMOT 159) This thinking instils inferior complex in the minds of girls when they attain the age of puberty and the label of weakness gets a permanent imprint on their psyche. Women like Kalyani accept their fate as the process of socialisation has so trained them to do.

The older women folk deem that it is not right to be away from the husband. Whatsoever is the reason they must be united with their husbands. Society as a whole believes that a moral duty lies with the woman to live in the husband’s house after marriage. No one reasons out whose fault it is if a woman loses the bond of ties with her husband. The disgrace is too much for a woman. No one questions a man why he has opted out to walk out on the family. No one questions from society why does not he live with her family but it is weak woman whom every one holds responsible. Thus Shankar’s mother says:

When are you going back to your husband? ...You should be with him. Look at his state! It’s all right to stay with your parents for a while, but that’s not your home. When my daughters come home, I don’t let them stay long. Go back to your husband, he’s a good man. If you’ve done wrong, he’ll forgive you. And if he has-women should not have any pride. (AMOT 161)

Sumi’s mind raises many questions when she looks at her mother who feels quite happy as being a wife. She wears her kumkum intact announcing to the world that she is a wife. Sumi is perplexed to see the sight of her mother as a wife. Her mind is haunted by a flood of confusing questions. She does not get to know whether keeping the façade of marriage alive is so significant despite the fact that you have no love and no physical touch. She reflects:

Is this what has helped Kalyani to endure everything, the fact that she is a wife and not a widow? The fact that she has the right to all the privileges of the wife of a living husband? …Is it enough to have a husband, and never mind the fact that he has not looked at your face for years, never mind the fact that he has not spoken to you for decades? Does this wifehood make up for everything, for the deprivation of a man’s love, for the feel oh his body against yours, the warmth of his breath on your face, the touch of his lips on yours, his hands on your breasts? (AMOT 167)
During the stint when Sumi is left, she emerges as a great warrior who not only picks up a school job but tries hard to sustain not her own self but making every possible effort to bring good luck for her daughters. Shashi Deshpande makes her women doing some sort of writing. Her women protagonists are often found to be on the writing desk. With the exception of Sarita who is a doctor, all her women be it Indu or Jaya are writers. The same is the case with Sumi who is not a professional writer like Indu and Jaya but she takes to writing to express her deep feelings. Though she earlier picks up writing as a children’s play which has to enacted in the school but the passion and the success that she meets, take her to greater heights. The play ‘The Gardner’s Son’ which Sumi has written fills her with delight. She feels: It feels so good, you can’t imagine! I’ve been so lazy all my life. And now suddenly I want to do so many things.” (AMOT 231) Sumi is very elated on getting job. It was hard thing on her part to move from a modest school teacher job to a teacher of a residential school. She announces, “This is the first thing in my life I think I’ve got for myself. I was sure I wouldn’t get it, there’s my age, it’s against me, and I have no experience at all.” (AMOT 230-231) She starts dealing with graver issues in her writing. She thinks about women’s condition and an idea about women’s sexual desires hits upon her heart. She thinks deeply about the condition of women in terms of expression of female hunger; an idea which perhaps Kamala Das deals with in almost every poem of her. Society as a whole represses women’s sexual needs. Society deems it unfit for a woman to articulate her physical needs. But the society does not hold same standards for men in terms of expression of sexuality. The double standards, She deems, clamour the inequality of both sexes men and women. She thinks of writing a play about it:

Female sexuality. We’re ashamed of owning it, we can’t speak of it, not even to our own selves. But Surpanakha was not, she spoke of her desires, she flaunted them. And therefore, were the men, unused to such women, frightened? Did they feel threatened by her?...Surpanakha neither ugly nor hideous, but a woman charged with sexuality, not frightened of displaying it... (AMOT 191)

What Sumi believes is a relationship where there is no question of powerful and weak. She is awakened to new dimensions of human relationship. She is out for equality. She thinks that it is possible to establish it and it is imperative to bring it in marriage. She has seen her parents’ life where her mother Kalyani seems as a victim but if Kalyani is a victim Shripati too seems a victim. Even he has denied himself the love and care of a doting wife. He has captivated himself
in exile careful enough not to be shaken out of it. Kalyani emerges not as a victim but as a strong woman to her. Silence if possessed for long period of time becomes not a tool of suffering rather a tool of the strong people to suffer and to resist pain. What the novel implies to tell is that women are going to be liberated and emancipated soon. The message of the novel can be summed up in Yasano Akiko’s lines-

\[\text{The day for moving mountains is coming,} \]
\[\text{You don’t think so?} \]
\[\text{It is coming: for a while the mountain sleeps,} \]
\[\text{But in other times} \]
\[\text{Mountains all moved in fire. If you do not believe that,} \]
\[\text{Oh man, this at least believes:} \]
\[\text{All sleeping, women} \]
\[\text{Will awake now and move.} \]

History is generally said to repeat itself and what happened to Kalyani has seeped into the life of Sumi as well. The Big House is again the witness of a catastrophe for another member of the house; Sumi who belongs to the third generation. Sumi is scared lest there should be any other repetition of history from her to her daughters. To her The Big House attains numerous connotations. She identifies it with the pain and anguish of women. She is therefore more motivated to eject herself and her daughters from it so that she may safeguard the future of her daughters. She is torn within: “Will I burden them with my past and my mother’s as well?” (AMOT 75) Sumi’s condition is quite like Kalyani as; “I was frightened. It seemed like something being repeated—my mother then, me now. And my daughters?” (AMOT 222)

Aru has joined hands with a woman lawyer named Surekha. She has seen her speaking eloquently on stage during a seminar on ‘women and law’. She starts visiting her office to obtain some legal advice about their condition. Under her influence she joins a women’s movement. Sumi is quite panicked the way Aru is shaping her future. She is getting hostile to marriage as well. She practically dislikes Premi’s telling her of a man who transferred his disease AIDS through marriage to her wife as he kept his disease a secret. Sumi however does not the changes that are sweeping Aru. She does not tolerate the fact that Aru should grow anti-masculine and should always remain a spinster. But she is quite happy to see that the earlier antagonism against Kalyani is missing in Aru. She has changed her stance towards Kalyani. She has formed a
friendship as, “It has suddenly become evident to all of them that Aru and Kalyani have, at some time, without their having noticed it, forged a partnership.” (AMOT 197) Kalyani does not talk about Rohit and her marriage with Aru as she has well understood her and gradually both of them have become good friends who have started sharing a bond of love and intimacy.

Surekha cannot provide Aru with good advice. She can best try for a divorce or maintenance but not more than that. However she is prepared to meet her parents so that she may talk to them and come to know whether something may be done to ameliorate the condition. But Surekha’s meeting with Aru’s parents could not help her out as Sumi is quite unresponsive to her questions. Gopal on the other hand talks freely to her. He puzzles Surekha as he holds high opinion of Sumi. She cannot believe the fact that a man who dotes on his wife can actually pick up such a step of deserting his wife. On being enquired Gopal tells her that, “They don’t need me anymore. There was a time when I used to wake me up in a cold sweat thinking of dying, of leaving my children fatherless. I thought I had an obligation to stay alive because of them. But that’s over.” (AMOT 215) After getting married to Sumi, Gopal’s fear starts when she bears Aru. For the first time when he holds her into her arms, he feels that the bond to life is so fragile. He is perplexed how would Aru survive who is so delicate? The moment his fear which has been lying latent within her gets manifest like a blast in a factory. He knows then that, “Life is nothing but a battle against death, a battle that we ultimately lose.” (AMOT 216)

But as luck would have it, Sumi and Shripati meet with an accident which is so fatal that both of them die. It is a catastrophe for the family. already they have faced so much and now this heart rending accident which in fact gives a shudder down every one’s spine. Aru despite the shock seems strong enough as she informs her grandmother-, “Amma, I’m here, I’m your daughter, Amma, I’m your son. I’m here with you, Amma, I’m here.” (AMOT 233)

After Sumi’s death Aru reads the play by Sumi ‘The Gardner’s Son’ and comes to know the fact that she has been thinking wrong about Sumi since Gopal left her. Aru thought that it does not matter to her whether Gopal lived with her or not but the fact is quite contrary. She reflects: “I said angry words to her, but I know now that was not true. It’s too late now, I can never speak to her, it’s too late.” (AMOT 240) Aru is always there to stand by her grandmother Kalyani. The narrator says,
She has taken the promise she had made to her grandmother very seriously, she is almost always by her side. Since she heard Kalyani’s story from Premi, her imagination has oscillated between pictures of extreme cruelty, even of violence, in her grandparents’ life, but they refuse to take shape, to gel and she is finally left with just two pictures: a woman, her two daughters by her side, frozen into an image of endurance and desperation. And a man, moving all over a city, tirelessly searching for his lost son. (AMOT 244)

It is only through Aru who represents the fourth generation of women that Shashi Deshpande believes that true emancipation can be achieved. Aru has seen everything and has known that there is no particular motive behind her father’s desertion of them. She has also better understanding of Sumi’s life and knows her well. Setting Sumi as her role model, one is her sole inspiration; Aru is seen as a mature woman who will try her best in the years to come to bring equality and justice in society. Through Aru the writer is quite hopeful that women would understand their identity and predicament Aru assures her father, “We’ll be quite alright, don’t worry about us.” (AMOT 246)

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