Chapter – III

The Impact of Cultural Variation on Man-Woman Relationship in Roots and Shadows and Jasmine
The narrator protagonist of *Roots and Shadows*, Indu, suffers throughout the novel for various reasons. Her own psychology as well as the social structure is responsible for her sufferings. Indu reveals her state of mind by introspecting, “Am I on my way to becoming an ideal woman? A woman who sheds her ‘I’, who loses her identity in her husband’s?” (54) The psychological state of the narrator is crucial in the development of man-woman relationship in the novel. Indu is seen in search of freedom and the discord that occurs between her and her husband Jayant, is an outcome of her psychological regression. An attempt is made to analyze the man-woman relationship in the novel through the protagonist’s points of view. It is explicit through the following factors:

1) Her craving for boundless freedom

2) Lack of proper communication

3) Her ego and

4) Her need for emotional support

Indu herself agrees that she was rebellious since her childhood. The family in which Indu grew up is governed by a rich family matriarch Akka, her grandfather’s youngest sister, a childless widow who had returned to her brother’s house after her traumatic marital life came to an end. Indu would ask questions about old traditions to her uncle. As a true
representative of traditional and patriarchal system, Old Uncle used to answer questions regarding various traditions. His answers, she did not understand at that time, but when she understands, make her feel that her freedom is in interrogation. She asks herself, “Can I not find freedom within this circle?” (Ibid) Freedom is Indu’s basic need, which she always searched for. She cannot stand anyone's domination. It may be an outcome of her parentless (as her father is presented as a vagabond) upbringing and English education. Her craving for freedom strongly affects her marital life. During her stay at parental home, she always finds her freedom in danger; as she has estranged relationship with the dominant Akka, which has been very well pointed out by Urvashi Sinha and Gur Pyari Jandial:

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However her intelligence, education and rebellious nature always brought her into conflict with Akka. Indu grows up questioning the conventions which defined different patterns of behaviour for girls and boys. Refusing to be meek, submissive and sacrificing which were traditionally expected of a girl. She was constantly at war with Akka (quoted in Mohan[ed.]2004:141).
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Dominance in the family is always a matter of question for women. The family may be patriarchal or matriarchal but the dominance of an elderly person always creates obstacles in the freedom of all the members. The restrictions imposed on them are tyrannical. This set up creates a
flame of rebellion among the minds of the members. Indu also had to face
the similar oppression.

In spite of being brought up in highly traditional and orthodox
family, Indu keeps herself away from the family and builds up a
personality of her own. When she finds her freedom in danger, she leaves
the home and seeks refuge in a hostel in Bombay. Indu finds herself quite
free in the hostel and decides never to go back in the suffocated world.
She takes up a job and breaks the shackles of traditional bound society.

At the same time her meeting with Jayant brings a drastic change in
her life. She finds a better chance to keep her freedom alive through her
marriage with Jayant. Though she loves Jayant very much, she loves her
freedom more. She has already enjoyed freedom by living in the hostel
and looks at her marriage as a permanent source of freedom. Her love for
Jayant, which she considers is the base of her marriage and freedom,
proves to be a total disappointment. Her three years stay at Jayant’s home
forces her to come back as soon as she gets the letter of Akka. Jayant does
not like her decision. The disagreement between the couple clearly shows
the chasm in their relationship.

Indu’s ego to hide marital discord makes one think her to be a
conscious lady who does not like to reveal that the decision to marry
Jayant was a wrong one. Her coming back to her parental home compels her to create a happy scene of her marriage as she had turned her back to her family and had married a man of her choice. There is a lot of difference in the life style at Jayant’s home and her family. Jayant’s home was perfect and clean while her parental home is scruffy and tatty even then it provides her comfort, she says, “...stretched herself on the bed with relief. Even joy... If only Jayant were here...” (34). She craves for Jayant at her parental home. She wants Jayant’s love and at the same time she wants freedom from his dominance, which is quite impossible. She loves Jayant passionately and finds herself incomplete without him. Even then she chooses to remain incomplete to enjoy her freedom.

The institution of marriage brings two families together. It’s a social bond that brings two strangers together. This institution becomes an instrument of woman’s exploitation and means of patriarchal control and most powerful weapon for female subjugation. Simone de Beauvior writes:

It has been said that marriage diminishes man, which is often true; but almost always it annihilates woman (1974:496).

Germaine Greer also observes that, “self-sacrifice is the leitmotif of most of the marital games played by women” (1971:80). Indian society is no exception to that and brings a lot of responsibilities and restrictions
especially for the woman. Indu’s definition of marriage is freedom. She marries Jayant with this in mind and gets frustrated because the marriage neither brings her desired freedom nor the satisfaction. She does not find any difference between her parental home and Jayant’s home, there is transference of domination. Indu charges Jayant of being traditional and says inwardly, “You’re the same after all. Same taboos, same fetishes, under a different name” (38). This clearly indicates lack of proper communication. In this connection she admits, “One thing my marriage had taught me. The gift of silence” (36).

Since the childhood, women are taught not to express openly as it is the sign of a spoilt girl. It continues even after marriage and they have to suffer. They have to face various problems due to lack of communication as Mary Wollstonecraft observes:

Women are told from their infancy and taught by the examples of their mothers that little knowledge of human weakness, justly cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience and a scrupulous attention to do a puerile kind of propriety will obtain from them the protection of man, and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for at least twenty years of their lives

(quoted in Geetha 2006:19).

Indu faces the problems and keeps mum at Jayant’s home and represents a common housewife. While introspecting upon the changes that marriage has brought to her, she says:
My marriage had taught me this too. I had learnt to reveal to Jayant nothing but what he wanted to see, to say to him nothing but what he wanted to hear. I hid my responses and emotions as if they were bits of garbage (41).

She discusses with Jayant the things, which he liked to hear and not her needs. She has to suppress her feelings at Jayant’s home. It shows that she is unable to enjoy the freedom. That compels her to detach herself from Jayant.

In spite of the discord in the relationship they are firm on the decision not to have a child. The reasons may be different but both agree to remain childless. Indu says, “And so Jayant and I, tell each other...not now we can’t afford it, we don’t have a reliable server, I can’t get leave...” (42). This shows that she could speak her mind on certain issues. Jayant and Indu discuss and agree with the issues of ‘his’ interest and not that of her.

Indu herself accepts that she is not relaxed at Jayant’s home and the sense of being trapped somewhere never let her relax. She thus expresses her wretched condition:

Like Saru, Indu blames not only Jayant but herself also for it. Indu’s excessive affection for Jayant compels her to mould her according to his will and wish, as Atre/Kripal observe:

In her marriage with Jayant she has compromised on several issues, seemingly in the belief that she was making adjustment out of love for him though he has never directly asked her to do so. She has even compromised her writing, substituting honesty with sycophantic dishonesty, just because Jayant had thought that was the order of the day (1998:25).

She is habituated with forgetting her ‘self’, and her needs. As she enquires, repeated, “Have I become fluid, with no shape, no form of my own? At that moment a savage truth had stared me in the face...Without wants there is no ‘I’” (Ibid). Indu accepts her shapeless and formless existence. She comes to know the inevitability of being submissive in a woman’s life as Virginia Woolf points out:

Imaginatively she is of the highest importance. Practically she is completely insignificant...Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could hardly spell and was the property of her husband (quoted in Bhatnagar2002:130).

Soon Indu realizes the futility of her behaviour and her self-surrender. She says, “Self-abnegation had seemed to me to be an exercise in futility” (58). To acquire freedom at her husband’s home, she
surrenders herself completely and becomes submissive but all prove futile.

Indu is detached emotionally with her husband who can’t fulfill her needs. Her need of emotional attachment compels her to come back to her parental home.

She can’t tolerate herself being caged or trapped and defines marriage as, “...a cage with two trapped animals glaring hatred at each other” (67). The emotional detachment and lack of proper communication, results in frustration and is the cause of her unhappy married life.

Her withdrawal to her parental home makes her introspect her relationship. During her stay she creates a show of being happy after marriage, “Now I dress the way I want” (54). But she knows the difference between her experience and the fact.

Indu accepts the fact when she informs her cousin, Naren:

...we are on different levels. You know the stage setting they have for some plays nowadays? It is like that. We are on different planes. He chooses his level. And I ...I try to choose the one he would like me to be on (90).

She experiences secondary status at Jayant’s home. She says, “I felt hedged in limited by my sex. I resented my womanhood because it closed so many doors to me” (87). The life, which she accepts as wife of Jayant
also proves to be the same as that of earlier. She comes to know the limitations of her sex while living with Jayant.

Being passionately in love with Jayant she frequently complains that Jayant is not her problem but the marital life, which inevitably comes with him and creates problems. It is Jayant who never asserts his manliness or treats her like a typical house-wife. But it is taken for granted like other Indian male that she should mould herself. Hence change takes place in Indu. Perhaps the change in her is the outcome of her love or may be lack of other substitute. She admits it while talking to Old Uncle “If you mean is it the right person for me, yes it is. But marriage ...it makes one so dependent. I don’t know about men but ...”(117). Both Jayant and Indu look at their marriage from different points of view. Indu suffers but Jayant has no problem with his connubial life. In this connection, Urvashi Sinha and Gur Pyari Jandial comment:

Her love for him makes her endure discontentedness she feels in her marital relationship. The process of self-negation makes her uncomfortable and uneasy even while Jayant sees no problem in their marriage


Indu loves Jayant blindly. It is the physical attraction which bonds her to Jayant. She thinks only about the freedom. Knowingly or unknowingly, Indu neglects its other byproducts.
The difference in outlook to marriage reveals their different temperament; they are not ‘made for each other couple’. It leads to the discord in their relationship.

She holds herself responsible along with Jayant for stifling of her freedom like Jaya in That Long Silence. Right from her childhood, she hates to be dependent. Marriage has taught her to deceive, to cheat as she has cheated Jayant by hiding her needs from him and not discussing her problem openly. Her frustration about marriage comes out when she talks to Mini, her cousin who is going to marry soon. She questions the male hierarchy:

But Mini ...marriage is ...It means living with a man. You have to listen him, endure his habits, his smell, his touch, his likes, his dislikes. You have to sleep with him, bear his children. Can you do all that with this man? (137)

Indu is surprised with Mini’s acceptance to the proposal in spite of the fact that her groom has no career. She speaks out woman’s predicament in tradition bound Indian society, “The Indian way. The husband. A definite article. Permanent. Not only for now, but forever .To be accepted. Stop” (139-40). She also strongly objects to Indian marriages. She detests the parents who consider an achievement in getting their daughters married. They just bring together the different entities,
“...two people brought together after cold blooded bargaining to meet, mate and reproduce so that the generations might continue” (3).

According to Indian tradition and culture, marriages are a sacred mean to form an institution of family. In family, man and woman both have the legal rights to conceive children. The society, too, accepts marriage as a legal outlet for the natural feelings like sex. There are certain restrictions on both the man and woman when they get married. These are imposed by the society and the traditions. The patriarchal system in India is the outcome of such traditions. The system entrusts all the rights of controlling the family to the elderly male family member. The tradition has always been unjust with the women. Though the reasons behind imposing restrictions on women are different but they prove to be the chains enslaving the fair sex.

The modern women who are educated and career oriented or even the egoistic women do not want to be yoked with the traditions. They want to stand against such illogical traditions and search for their ‘self’. In the same way, Indu tries to revolt against the traditions, which puts the shackles around the woman and deny freedom. Y.S. Sharadha observes that Jayant is a barrier to Indu’s development:

Marriage is not the same thing to man as to woman. The two sexes are different from each other though one has
necessity of the other. A woman like Indu, who is independent, is allowed no direct influence upon her husband. She has to reach out beyond her self towards the social milieu only through her husband but her husband instead of becoming a source of freedom unlike her ancestral home which was tradition bound becomes a barrier for Indu’s development. He is unconcerned and indifferent to her emotions and urges


Indu, being caught in the flux of Jayant and her needs, uses her stay at the parental home to think about her marriage, and her relationship with Jayant.

Jayant representing the typical Indian male considers woman with no desire or thought, just like Old Uncle, “For a woman, intelligence is always a burden, Indu. We like our women not to think” (36). It is human nature that man wants his woman to be vigorous, healthy and chaste. He considers ‘sexual pleasure’ as a male privilege and woman’s claim to it arouses male anger, and he generally repudiates feminine sensuality. Simone de Beauvoir very perceptively brings out the indispensable situation of women in marriage in the following lines:

It is duplicity of the husband that dooms the wife to misfortune of which he complains later that he is himself the victim. Just as he wants her to be at once warm and cool in bed, he requires her to be wholly his and yet no burden: he wishes her to establish him in a fixed place on earth and to leave him free, to assume the monotonous daily routine and not to bore him, to be always at hand and never importunate: he wants to have her all to himself and not to belong to her.
to live as one of the couple and to remain alone. Thus she is betrayed from the day he marries her (1974:497).

What Simone de Beauvoir explores is true and Deshpande too exposes the hypocrisy and indifferent attitude of men. Jayant oppresses Indu in the bed by leaving her unsatisfied. She tells Naren, “Jayant, so passionate, so ready, sitting up suddenly saying, ‘No not now’, when I had taken the initiative. A crack then. A chasm now” (91). Jayant’s rejection to her ardent love rooted deep in her mind. At her parental home she murmurs in sleep, ‘It’s not fair, it’s not fair’ which reminds her love making with Jayant:

Jayant and I at the end of one of our moments of love. And I, aghast at my total self-abandonment, had cried out, ‘It’s not fair’. And Jayant, staring at me in bland astonishment, moving off me without asking me why I said that and what it meant (140).

She experiences the disillusionment and suffers a silent sexual humiliation. Jayant doesn’t care for her and leaves her to suffer. Indian males do not endure the domination even for sometime. It is always observed that woman who acquires power to dominate man and challenge male supremacy is a subject of hatred. Editor of the magazine Savvy observes in his article, “Most cultures prefer to see women as creature without any sexual desires-created only for the pleasure of men and for
producing children” (1995:129). Men always demand a submissive wife, a twenty four hours servant. Manu declares:

Day and night, women must be kept in subordination to the males of the family: in childhood to the father, in youth to her husband, in old age to her sons. [...] Even though husband be destitute of virtue and seeks pleasure elsewhere, he must be worshipped as god

(quoted in Siddhartha Sharma 2005:1).

The Hindu tradition has always advocated husband worshipping, self-effacement and sub-ordination of woman. It forces woman to suppress her desires and sexuality. Chandra Nisha Singh remarks:

The protagonist Indu, initially, struggles against the cultural inheritance of sexual passivity, and affirms, with sense of shame her body’s demand for sexual pleasures. She is forced to repress her sexuality for fear of her husband’s sexual biases (2007:326).

Jayant’s traditional beliefs disappoint Indu. He thinks like a traditionalist that woman should submit herself after her marriage, she should be passive and not demonstrative of her love and emotion. Indu tells Naren despairingly:

...it shocks him to find passion in a woman. It puts him off. When I am like that, he turns away from me. I have learnt my lesson now. And so I pretend. I am passive. An unresponsive. I am still dead (91-92).
Jayant being a stereotype male uses her like a toy. When he finds passion in her, he does not respond to her. Gradually, Indu learns and starts pretending to be passive. Mary Wollstonecraft points out:

...the toy of man, his rattle must jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused (quoted in Bhatnagar:2002:130).

In a happy married life, it is expected that the male and female should come together and form an institution named family. The family further helps in the nourishment of children and thus retains a social tradition and culture of the society. The basis of a successful marriage is trust, sacrifice and love. There must be good communication in the conjugal life, lack of which creates a rift between the husband and wife. This can lead to the discord in the relationship. Ego also proves to be disastrous in marriage. Inner conflict created by ego creates miscommunication and affects the man-woman relationship.

These two factors seem to affect Indu’s married life. There is both lack of trust, love and lack of communication. It is Indu’s egoist nature that withholds her from disclosing the fact that her marriage is a failure. She discloses the secret only to Naren and tells Naren that Jayant has killed her hope and expects her to be a dutiful wife. She fears that her opposition will break her marriage. As she says:
The hideous ghost of my own cowardice confronted me as I thought of this...that I had clung tenaciously to Jayant, to my marriage, not for love alone but because I was afraid of failure. I had to show them that my marriage, that I, was a success (174-75).

Indu accepts in this process that she has compromised and killed her ‘self’. Naren’s question about her expectations from Jayant shows her resentment. She answers with grief and rage, “I expect nothing from him. Nothing. Not from him, not from you, not from any one else” (174). It is her ego that compels her to compromise. It is due to the lack of proper communication that she doesn’t discuss her needs with Jayant. Her sexual life fails to offer emotional support just because of Jayant’s male ego and his upbringing as a part of patriarchal system.

Patriarchy is one of the features of Indian society; gender domination is the base of the patriarchal system. In this system, women are given secondary status in the family. Right from the childhood, the children face the gender discrimination. This continues throughout the life and passes from generation to generation. Women are expected to remain silent. They do not enjoy decision-making power. Women are always taken for granted. The man is head of the family and everyone is expected to behave as per his wish. Women are always in the bonds. Man can enjoy bondless freedom, for woman, it is a stigma. Women have been so used to
it that they rarely try to get themselves free from such bondages. They
tolerate the oppression and behave accordingly. This extreme tolerance
creates a gulf and adversely affects the man-woman relationship. Urvashi
Sinha and Gur Pyari Jandial rightly point out:

Thus Jayant's views are coloured by the age-old traditions,
which had defined woman, as a means to fulfill man's
needs and not as a human being with her sexual needs.
Whereas Indu, a woman who disregarded such traditions
and is passionately in love with her husband, is hurt to find
her love rejected and suppressed by him. It upsets her that
while she adopts passively and suppresses her emotions for
his happiness, he takes her happiness for granted and
ignores her sexuality (quoted in Mohan [ed.]2004:142).

Right from the childhood, Indu has experienced sex discrimination.
Her father, being a vagabond, left her at the disposal of his family without
caring for his sole daughter. Her uncle, who behaved well with her, had
the patriarchal mind. Being a super sex, Jayant oppressed her
psychologically. Old Uncle behaves like a stereotype male. All men who
came in her life made her aware of her subordinate position, except
Naren.

While coping with the various responsibilities and duties, women in
Indian society have to be careful about the familial relationship. It is
expected that they should always try to retain peace and harmony in the
conjugal life at the cost of sacrifice of their own principles and happiness.
As a result, women are suffocated in Indian families since time immemorial. Indu represents a typical suffocated wife.

It is not her marriage, which made her feel suffocated and uneasy but her writing as well. Jayant is methodical, fastidious and too much ambitious. Jayant like Manu in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* wants to lead a luxurious life through the earning of his writer wife. Jayant’s profession is not clearly mentioned in the novel but he is keen on income of his wife and doesn’t want to take any chance to loose it. As Jayant denies her freedom in the bedroom, Indu like the feminist Helen Cixous’ proclaims, “women must write through their bodies” (quoted in Ray/Kundu [ed.]2006:196) and tries to articulate her feminine voice through her creative writing. But her interests are curtailed by her so-called broad minded husband because of money. To retain the family peace, she accepts the role of Jayant’s submissive and passive wife. That restricts her self-development firstly by taking away her freedom of thought and expression and secondly by denying her scope of giving free play to her artistic potential.

Jayant always encourages her to write. It is her hobby to write. She admits once, “There is the only thing I know I can do...I can write” (17). But the problem is that the writing with feminine consciousness and her
realistic and fearless journalism, which she craves to do, has no value in the materialistic world. During initial days in her career, she was stunned to know the facts of journalism. The editor wants her to write unrealistically just to make it saleable, he remarks, "And no foolishness, mind, Indu. It won't do. God, if we were to publish all the dirt about all the dogs and bitches around...!" (19). It is such a compromise to which she is not ready. She is caught between the flux of her emotional outlook and practical world.

Being a member of practical world, Jayant too has the same thoughts like that of the editor. He explains to her and assures her that he will publish her work. Any how he wants her to continue writing because Jayant cannot afford losing the source of income. He wants money by hook or crook to fulfill his dreams to own the furnished bungalow in the suburb and a four wheeler. Indu is a source of his luxurious life. When she declares her intention of quitting job, he becomes furious at Indu’s idea of skipping writing. He wants her to write just for the sake of money. Jayant tries to convince her, "That’s life! What can one person do against the system! No point making yourself ridiculous with futile gestures" (Ibid).
Indu’s compromises are welcomed by the publisher but it forces her to resign the job. She could tolerate the behaviour of the outsider, publisher but it was unbearable for her to withstand the prudish mannerisms of the insider, Jayant. Her better half suggests her, “We need the money, don’t we? Don’t forget, we have a long way to go” (Ibid). She mutely accepts it and goes back to work. Suppressing her wish to ask him, “To go where?” (Ibid) But she keeps mum and avoids direct confrontation with Jayant which leads to the lack of proper communication between the couple.

Indu realizes her limitations and bows down to the male domination. She accepts that her free writing, which expressed her joy and innocence, has come to an end. She says, “…everything had dried up in me”(120). Jayant’s domination and the societal restrictions kill the writer in her. She thinks, “I would live in this place which was my home and do the kind of writing I wanted to do” (158). Her stay at her ancestral home provides her time and space to ponder over her marital status. She also finds more time to analyze her post-marital relationship. Lastly she says:

There was only one thing I wanted now… and that was to go home. Yes, home. The one I lived in with Jayant. That was my only home. To think otherwise would be to take the cowards way again. I would put all this behind me and
go back to Jayant (205).

Indu's stay at her parental home makes her resolve that she would not say anything to Jayant about Naren and she would lead her life on her own terms. Indu recalls her past and ponders over her life—her career as a journalist, her love for married life and about her illusion of hard-won independence. After illuminating interactions with the varied personalities in her family; Naren, Old Uncle and Atya in the course of this novel, Indu works out the future and her own personal equation as well. Suppression and suffocation in family life leads to her to search for some sort of outlet. Failure on every possible ground compels one to seek emotional support. If it is not available within the threshold, one is compelled to search outside the frame. Many a times this situation is responsible for the extra-marital relationship. This relationship is defined thus:

An extramarital affair is a situation where two people are involved in an inappropriate romantic relationship. A romantic and sexual relationship, sometimes one of brief duration, between two people who are not married to each other. (www.philanderers.com).

Indu's extra-marital relationship with Naren also plays a vital role in the development of the novel. Naren a well educated bachelor, M.A. in Economics with first class, drifts from one job to another. He is her distant cousin. Her relationship with Naren proves to be a life-giving to
the dead marital relationship of Indu. Naren is very close to her, understands her and her needs which Jayant has ignored all the time. She even unveils her bedroom to Naren which is too personal to everybody. She admits, “Reaching across the barriers I had built round myself?” (27) He is a foil to Jayant and that’s why she welcomes him. Naren offers Indu everything that Jayant denied. She confesses, “My heart turned over at the sincerity of his words. To belong, to be wanted, needed, loved, desired, admired...how many traps there are! And I fall into all of them” (29). In short, Naren proves to be a ray of hope to her.

Her physical proximity to Naren infuses self-confidence in her. Naren taught her not to resent her womanhood but to accept the fact and express it freely. He provides her not only sexual outlet but also emotional satisfaction. Naren is a person who really wants her progress as a human being. She does not remorse over being involved in illicit relationship. On the contrary, she expresses her genuine gratitude to him. He teaches her that her responses to Jayant are quite natural and nothing is shameful in it. It does not prove her less human being. Conversely, Jayant’s rejection in sexual intercourse makes her hide her passion as if it is a serious offence. Indu confides:

So that’s all I am, Naren. Not a pure woman. Not a too faithful wife. But an anachronism. A woman who loves her
husband too much. Too passionately. And is ashamed of it (92).

The relationship with Naren ends automatically with his death. Thus the extra-marital relationship narrated in the novel proves helpful to Indu to understand her marriage, her psychological knots, and her relationship with Jayant. She realizes that her psychological needs like freedom, proper communication, emotional support and her ego are all fulfilled with Naren. It gives her confidence to practice it with Jayant who is her life partner and future. Though Indu established extra-marital relationship by Naren, it is also important that Indu does not get carried away with the relationship. She never indulges in another illicit relationship. After Naren’s death, Indu straightaway chooses to return to her husband. She thinks, “He…? To get back at the family? At me? And I? To get back at Jayant?” (196) She takes it as a part of her natural response to the disappointing relations with Jayant. So still she finds a room for Jayant and detachment for Naren. She thinks emotions are most important in any relationship and her mind being pre-occupied with Jayant, she is unable to develop such feelings for Naren. She realizes that she has to understand Jayant. Naren make her realize her own need to be free, free to live without pretence and on her own terms. After two intercourses with Naren, she comes to know its futility, and says:
For Naren and I… it was no infatuation. Naren was still Naren to me. I saw him for what he was. Twice, briefly, our flesh has touched. But that had, oddly, created no new bond between us. It had not been so for me with Jayant. Then, with his touch, I had felt as if I had lost only one part of myself, but the whole. Now Naren’s detachments made me feel untouched. There were no lingering feelings to make us uncomfortable. There was no difference in the way we behaved with each other, either. The same ease, the same acrimonious bickering, the same moments of sudden understanding and laughter (188).

There is no way left for her than going back to Jayant. She resolves to return to Jayant and hastens the work assigned by Akka. She believes in starting a new life by accepting it confidently. Seema Sunil remarks that at last:

Indu discovers that relationships are roots of once being and follow one like shadows (1995:23).

Her withdrawal is not her defeat but triumph of the independence of women. Her perception is best expressed through the words of Virginia Woolf in A Room of One’s Own, “There is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind” (1979:76).

Indu’s stay transforms her from a meek, docile and humble woman to a bold, challenging, conscious and rebellious woman. She resolves to resign the job and acquire her freedom for which she craves throughout the novel. She determines to come out of her emotional upheaval and lead a meaningful life with her husband. This shows the need of proper
communication, which is going to be fulfilled automatically and her need
for emotional support as well. Eventually, she manages to come out of her
psychological suppression, which has affected the man-woman
relationship. She acquires this success with her short interval at Akka’s
home as Y.S.Sharadha justly remarks:

The home she had discarded becomes a place of refuge, of
solace and consolation. It is Akka’s house which offers her
ample opportunities to know herself. It is here that she is
able to discover her roots as an independent woman, a
daughter, a mother, and a commercial writer

Indu emerges a completely changed woman. She is not ashamed of
her love and sexual needs but feels proud of it and meets Jayant with a
challenge for him to accept her with her altered views. Indu decides to be
no more a puppet but to assert herself as Simone de Beauvior writes:

...the more women assert themselves as human beings the
more the marvelous quality of the ‘other’ will die in them

Thus, Indu proves that the freedom does not lie in action but in
thought and expression. Parvati Bhatnagar adds in this context:

In the end, comes the realization that freedom lies in
having the courage to do what one believes is the right
thing to do and the determination and the tenacity to
adhere to it, which alone can bring harmony in life
To Indu’s resolution, Jayant too contributes greatly and his recognition to her true self helps Indu to understand him and be happy in the married life. Once she had grudged that he didn’t know anything about her and he had answered that he knows as much of her as she allowed him to know. Both of them know each other, which enables her to experience real happiness. Happily she admits, “There is an ease in our relationship that was not there before” (15). The novel ends on a happy note. Indu, like a chaste Indian wife, proves herself a typical Deshpande heroine.

However Jasmine, unlike other central female characters of Bharati Mukherjee, enters into intimate relationship with men. The novel Jasmine deals with the protagonist Jasmine’s eventful journey through life that has led her through many transformations-Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase and Jane, through diverse geographical locales from Punjab to California via Florida, New York and Iowa. At every stage of her life, Jasmine revolted against her fate. Her own thoughts about her changing identities are quite suggestive:

I have had a husband for each of the women I have been. Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jase, Bud for Jane, Half-Face for Kali (197).
Jasmine, the narrator shifts between the past and present, her earlier life in India and the present life at Bud’s home in America. Jasmine, in fact, symbolizes the movement that transforms Jyoti to Jasmine, Jase, Jane who negates the age-old traditions and the prophecy of astrologer. Thus Jasmine transforms herself from an ordinary village girl from Punjab to an adventurous, self-assertive, go-getter and self-determined woman from America.

To study the man-woman relationship in the novel, one has to take into account her relationship with all the men she comes in contact with. It is her odyssey from home to homelessness and back home. It is also her transformation from Indianization to Americanization.

Before dealing with her first relationship with Prakash one has to peep into her childhood incidents, which affect her future. During the partition riots, her family has to shift from Lahore to the small and remote Punjabi feudal village, Hasnapur where, “…daughters were curses” (38). She was the fifth daughter and seventh of the nine children of her parents. Jasmine, whose parents have no dowry to pay for her marriage is undesirable for grooms. Jasmine like all village girls, is a victim of societal suppression “Village girls are like cattle; whichever way you lead them that is the way they will go” (46) was the outlook of the people of
Hasnapur where she was brought up. Socialization plays an important role in the construction of gender, and bears the link between social values and male domination. Indu suffers patriarchal as well as familial domination whereas poor Jasmine faces patriarchal domination. This powerful instrument has enormous influence in conditioning not only a girl’s but also a boy’s psyche since its influence begins early in childhood. For a girl, such forces from society either create a total submissive or rebellious personality. Jasmine, like Indu, is a mixture of both. Symbolically speaking Jyoti’s transformation is the manifestation of her journey from age-old traditions to the new world of modernity. Two important incidents in her life introduce her as a rebellious child. Jyoti is depicted as a rebel against blind faiths and superstition, as T. Padma points out:

Two incidents figure prominently in Jasmine’s memory of Hasnapur. One is her having had to kill a mad dog rushing to attack her and the other is her receiving a star like wound on her forehead while she tripped and fell in an attempt to run away from an irate astrologer who predicted an early widowhood for her (quoted in Dhawan/Shastry[ed.]1994:80).

Jasmine remembers each and every word of the astrologer after her breaking away from the Indian roots and settling in the U.S.A till the end of the novel.

The phallocentric hold on the institution determines woman’s code of behaviour and the boundaries of her space, exclusion and invisibility
becomes strategic device for patriarchy and permits no alternatives to the marriage. Her mother wants Jasmine to marry as early as possible. She doesn’t think education is necessary for a girl who finally has to bear children and has to do her kitchen work. Her father dies in an accident leaving her unwedded, worsens their condition. Her brothers come back leaving their technical school from Jullundhar to shoulder the household responsibility. To support her widowed mother, Jasmine takes the whole responsibility of the household.

Her brothers have friends who come to their house. Sukhi and Prakash are two among them. Sukhi is terrorist minded and as such he is disliked by Jasmine. Prakash on the other hand is good natured and a reformist. Jasmine likes him. Her first meeting with Prakash is very vague. She overhears a voice of the new man who has come for the first time to their home and falls in love with the man without looking at him and expresses, “I fell in love with that voice. It was low, grave unfooled. I was prepared to marry the man who belonged to the voice” (Ibid). His first visit impresses her. She confirms her love for him saying, “Love before first sight: that’s our Hasnapuri way” (67). It exposes the premonition of the disaster. Prakash says about Sukhi “This man is a danger to us and to himself”(66). He further says, “I wouldn’t go because
I was afraid of Sukhi’s putting bullets in our heads” (67). Annoyed by the straightforward comment, extremist Sukhi quits the discussion. Prakash is aware of the fact. But Jasmine does not care for the differences among them as she is obsessed with her love for Prakash. To satisfy her curiosity, she remains there and learns more about Prakash and comes to know that he is a city boy from Amritsar, studying and trying for a job in Germany or the United States. Though Jasmine’s brothers and Prakash belong to the same field of technology, she says, “...Prakash sounded more like a surgeon, a confident professional in starched white, lifting microchips with wire forceps” (Ibid).

It is her dream to marry a man who is fluent in English. She gets information about Prakash from Arvind-prar, “Prakash isn’t a dunderhead like us. He’ll move to America in a year or two. He already has friends in New York. He knows ways” (68). His answer satisfies her. Nothing happens in between, which makes her worry, “...Prakash was a phantom, a voice without a body” (69). Prakash meets her in the cinema hall with Arvind-prar and praises her interest in English. Two weeks after their meeting they marry each other. She describes her marriage, “Ours was a no-dowry, no-guests Registry office wedding in a town, a 250-rupee taxi ride south of Hasnapur” (75). Rebel against blind faiths and old traditions,
Jasmine manifests courage to repudiate the centuries old tradition of marriage by first checking the boy’s horoscope. She rejects the proposal of her father to become steno; on the contrary, she expresses her desire to become doctor and set up her own clinic in a big town. She also refuses to marry a widower selected by her grandmother and ultimately marries Prakash.

Marriage is an institution that is historically filled with restrictions. From age, to gender, to social status, restrictions are placed on marriage by society. But Jasmine is quite fortunate in this regard as she neither faces any restriction nor the male domination.

The man-woman relationship in Jasmine changes from time to time. Jasmine has to frequently adapt herself to the changing situation. When she meets Prakash she has her own dreams. Jasmine’s fascination for English and English speaking people brings her closer to Prakash who is a modern man. Self-respect, self-pride and confidence are his assets while Jasmine is a girl of traditional mindset. Her little schooling was not enough to broaden her views. After marriage, Jasmine has to adjust with Prakash’s modernity. Prakash is never ashamed of his rustic and uneducated wife and he never hesitates to introduce Jasmine to his friends.
Prakash is a progressive person, an opponent of feudal system who gives Jasmine new identity. To break off the past, he gives her a new name Jasmine, Jyoti-Jasmine she shuttle between identities. Broadminded Prakash attempts to transform her thoroughly and creat a new identity for her as a city bred woman, leaving her past behind. In the close moments, he expresses, “You are small and sweet and heady, my Jasmine. You’ll quicken the whole world with your perfume” (77). The early heavenly days of her marriage comfort her. His attempts to transform her remind of the similar attempts of Prof. Higgins, in Shaw’s play, Pygmalion.

Being an orphan child, Prakash has been brought up by his uncle and aunt. But it is his self-respect that doesn’t allow him to take his new bride to his uncle’s home when both of them are happily ready to receive the couple. Instead, he sets up his new household, which influences Jasmine a lot, and it makes her believe in her bright future ignoring the prophecy of the astrologer.

In a patriarchal society or even traditionally, motherhood is regarded as the ‘biological destiny’ and the highest ambition of a woman. Married woman wants an issue as early as possible after the marriage. The social structure and psychological set up of every woman is responsible for this. According to the tradition, the woman who doesn’t have any
issue is said to be ominous and has to face many problems in the society as a sterile woman. To avoid this, every woman wants to get an issue. So it was but natural for Jasmine to desire motherhood. Prakash is well aware of the fact and tries to persuade her from her demand. She even argues with her educated husband for this sake. As he is a sensible person, he understands her needs and denies strictly ‘youthful pregnancy of children bearing children’ (115) as she remembers:

    Prakash had always been so concerned for me. He was afraid of youthful pregnancy, of children bearing children. He talked to me of muscles tearing of the girl’s body only looking mature, no matter what the rituals, the feudalisms, said (115-116).

He never lets her alone in the darkness. He dominates her but his is a positive dominance.

    Jasmine being immature, teenager and with rural background always acts as a child. Prakash understands her and never tries to dominate like a possessive or typical patriarchal male. Jasmine always has heard about ‘the beating husband’ but she thanks God for not having such a husband. Once she charges him that in spite of being a good engineering student, he can’t understand a woman’s need to be a mother. Prakash as a loving and caring husband explains to her, “…but of all the machinery in the world, seen and unseen. It all ran by rules, if we just
understood them” (78). She accepts his decision not blindly or submissively but knowingly as a sensible wife. There is thorough understanding between them. Jasmine admits, “We shouldn’t do anything if we didn’t both agree” (Ibid). They are emotionally attached and have physical attraction but there is no sign of lust in it. Prakash never hurts her and both live happily without sensual pleasure. It is seen that newly married couple’s early days are filled with happiness because a new world opens for them—the world of unlimited sensual pleasures but soon it fades away if there is no emotional attachment. Jasmine and Prakash are united without such kind of pleasure. It proves that they are bound spiritually and not physically. Prakash respects her womanhood and provides her opportunity to assert her needs.

Prakash remains out of his home for about fifteen to sixteen hours as he has taken up two jobs, but Jasmine, like true Indian wife, feels his absence. He takes her out on Sunday, which makes her feel proud. Prakash studies hard. Unlike his owner Mr. Jagtiani, Prakash never believes in short cuts in life. Proud of Prakash’s hard work, Jasmine expresses her satisfaction, “We were content” (80). On the other hand, Prakash is not happy with his economic condition and wants to offer her
luxurious life and he is confident that one or the other day he, “will be able to make you genuinely happy” (Ibid).

Prakash expresses his ambition to go to America as he is sick of his oppressor Mr. Jagtiani. Once, Prakash comes home drunk and scolds her. She knows that it is an outcome of his frustration for Mr. Jagtiani who uses him and does not provide much scope to his talents. He scolds Jasmine for her venture of becoming a sales girl. He hands over her a letter from Devinder Vadhera to read which is written in English but when she expresses her inability and gives it back to him, he bursts out:

What’s the matter? You’ve forgotten all the English Masterji dinned into you? You’ve become like the others, my little flower?... Caring only about pregnancies? (83)

After this incident, Prakash suggests her to read his manuals to pass her time. Jasmine follows his instruction and tries to improve upon her English. Prakash happily says that he would make her expert in his business, “I like having you near me when I work. We’ll have to open our own store someday” (89). They name their dream project ‘Vijh & Wife.’ Prakash starts bringing VCR, radio, ruined toaster, alarm clocks, calculator and fans to ‘probe and heal’(89) for her.

While they lead a happy conjugal life, the Khalsa Lions’ activities are on the height in the city. She also senses this and says, “But these
were unhappy times for the city” (Ibid). The Khalsa Lions start burglaries of electrical things to transform them into bombs and to create anarchy in the city. With the result, the conjugal life was smooth without any hindrance except some bickerings. The fate is different for him. Their happiness is not everlasting.

In the month of April, Prakash’s dream comes true. He gets the confirmation letter of his admission in ‘Florida International Institute of Technology’, in America. He expresses his joy, “I don’t share losses, only winnings” (90). He had hidden the news of his application to Florida thinking, “The husband must protect the wife whenever he can. Where is it written that a sixteen-year-old girl can share a man’s losses? Such a man should be put in jail” (Ibid). He never wants to share his losses with his newly wedded wife but is ready to share his success. When he expresses his inability to take her to America, Jasmine too expresses her inability to live without him. She expresses emotionally, “If you leave me, I will jump into a well” (92). Prakash is aware of both the facts: his ambitious departure as well as his newly married bride’s demands. So he tries to blend these two facts well by explaining her that the feudal Jyoti in her is dead now. He tries to boost her confidence saying, “You are
Jasmine now. You can’t jump into wells!” (Ibid) Prakash is a husband who believes in woman’s strength and also nourishes it.

An evening in the month of April proves to be the last evening in the life of the ever happy couple. This evening snatches Prakash away from Jasmine forever by leaving her future into darkness. They both go to a sari shop to buy a wedding sari for her. After buying a new sari, on the way back to home, she sees Sukhi and two Khalsa Lions leaving the music box. She even shows it to Prakash and the next moment Prakash succumbs to the Khalsa Lions’ activities that spread terror in the region by their acts of senseless violence. Thus, the happy married life comes to an end. Jyoti, benumbed with grief, resolves to complete Prakash’s mission and thus avenge his death.

The second man who occupies her life is Taylor: a university professor in his thirties, in America. But before reaching him, this village girl, in a stunt-film-like manner lands in Florida as an illegal alien, where she has to pass through dreadful ordeals like her widowhood, melodramatic journey, brutal rape and murder of the rapist, starvation and desperate attempts to save herself from being arrested, fortunate meeting with Lillion Gordan and brief stay at Vadhura’s, getting ‘green card’ and getting job as a Day mummy in Taylor’s family.
Taylor is funny, his style of speaking, his humane conduct and his good sense of humor everything appears like a jolly person. Jasmine admits:

He smiled his crooked-toothed smile, and I began to fall in love. I mean, I fell in love with what he represented to me, a professor who served biscuits to a servant, smiled at her and admitted her to the broad democracy of his joking, even when she didn’t understand it (167).

Jasmine easily mixes up with the family. Taylor gets attracted towards Jasmine. She too, falls in love with Taylor. In an Indian society child bearing is an important phenomenon. Being a typical Indian woman adopted daughter Duff is beyond her imagination that Duff is not Tayolrs natural child. The entire concept is foreign to her. She reveals her inability to imagine a non-genitic child:

I could not imagine a non-genetic child. A child that was not my own, or my husband’s, struck me as a monstrous idea. Adoption was as foreign to me as the idea of widow remarriage (Ibid).

Her Americanization starts slowly; actually it has started on the very first day she stepped in when she burns her suitcase outside the motel after the incident of the brutal rape and murders Half Face. Still her Indian past objects the freeness of the culture, “Truly there was no concept of shame in this society” (171). She finds it difficult to assimilate with the American culture. She cannot express her love to Taylor as she is very
much ‘Indian’. Love is all about acceptance and belonging. As it has here defined:

For most of us, love is a full-time obsession. We are concerned about the love of our parents, children, co-workers, friends, and many, many others. There is nothing more important to our emotional, psychological, or spiritual well-being than love. It is a vital part of any growth process. We need to have a healthy dose of self-love so that we can, in turn, love the world. Dreams may be filled with images of love, friendship, compassion, and lust. In the end, it is all about acceptance and belonging. To be loved is to feel accepted and have a sense of belonging. In our dreams we may be trying to figure out this mystery called love. The dream may be wish-fulfilling or compensatory in nature. It may be spiritual or practical, but always deals with a significant part of our psyche or our daily lives (http://www.dreamloverinc.com).

It is her compassion and tender caring that impresses Taylor. Jasmine admits her love for Taylor which is devoid of sex and lust, “The love I felt for Taylor that first day had nothing to do with sex. I fell in love with his world, its ease, its careless confidence and graceful self-absorption” (Ibid). She easily compares her life with Taylor and earlier experiences in America; the life of being illegal alien, a murderer, widow, raped, and destitute. But Taylor wishes her to be “…humorous, intelligent, refined and affectionate”(Ibid). Her stay at Claremont Avenue really offers glorious American life with Taylor. She can’t believe it. Taylor is very friendly and never treats her like an employee. Jasmine is
provided with a separate room. So Taylor shifts to another room and he says, “For you, Jasmine, I’ll be homeless” (172). Apart from Taylor, she has a good relationship with Duff and Wylie too. She mingles with Duff and learns about American stores, neighborhood and shopping from her.

Taylor, Jasmine and Duff create their new world in the house except Wylie. They always make fun in absence of Wylie. They cannot include Wylie because she is a serious sort of woman. Taylor behaves naturally and never tries to impress Jasmine. They avoid Duff to get solitude but Duff is always with them and enjoys their company. Taylor gives her a new name ‘Jase’. She expresses:

Could I really have not guessed that I was head over heals in love with Taylor? I liked everything he said or did. I liked the name he gave me Jase (176).

Like Prakash, Taylor offers her the space for development and transformation. Jase too is amazed at her transformation. The change in her makes her exclaim:

But Jyoti was now a Sati-goddess; she had burned herself in a trash-can -funeral pyre behind a boarded-up motel in Florida. Jasmine lived for the future, for Vijnh and wife. Jase went to movies and lived for today (Ibid).

Her transformation from Jasmine to Jase provides her confidence. She calls herself “prowling adventurer” (Ibid). All her dreams come true
due to Taylor. So she urges from the bottom of her heart, “I pray my job of Duff’s ‘Day mummy’ would last forever” (177).

Jasmine finds herself lucky to be the Day mummy of Duff, “I felt lucky. My pillow was dry, a launch pad for lift-off. Taylor, Wylie, and Duff were my family” (179).

Though Jasmine is in love with Taylor, she never hates Wylie. She is not selfish and never thinks Wylie as a foil to herself. Wylie leaves for Paris with her lover Stuart. She finds that sudden departure of Wylie seems to have left no bitterness in Taylor’s life. Jasmine’s acceptance of both the change in her life and the whole hearted attitude of Taylor who is above race and cultural barriers is worth nothing. She finds Taylor didn’t want to change her. He didn’t want to scour the foreingess. Wylie’s departure offers her the opportunity to confirm her place in Taylor’s home. Wylie is aware of Taylor’s love for Jase, but it is not the reason of her departure. Her act is of a liberated American woman. Wylie’s leaving Taylor so easily is a shock to Jase. She wonders how Prakash would have reacted to such a situation:

Prakash would have slugged and raved. Prakash would have been impossibly possessive. He would have put in new locks and bars on the outside of the front door to the apartment (182-83).
On the other hand, Taylor feels that he cannot do without Jase. He fears he would go crazy without her, “It won’t be Okay by itself. But you will make it Okay Jase. If you hadn’t been here. I’d have gone crazy” (182). Taylor and Jase are happy to be together in Wyllie’s absence, as Jase observes, “The truth is we were happy, happier than Wyllie’d been around filling up the apartment with her restlessness and unspoken guilt” (184). Jase, working with the American family, experiences all materialistic pleasures. She goes out for movie, outing, shopping and whatever she likes. Jasmine thinks Taylor has rescued her from deterioration in the alien land. When they go in the park with Duff, Taylor expresses his genuine feelings openly for the first time after two years, “I think may be I need you” (187). Jasmine is also eager to love him, and wish “I don’t want this conversation to end” (Ibid). But before she expresses her love for him the fate has another shocking surprise for her which violets her idyllic life. She sees Sukhi – the murderer of her husband in disguise of a hot-dog vendor asking about her. She trembles with terror, when she tells Taylor about Sukhi, he promises her to protect her. He is even ready to leave New York and settle anywhere with her and Duff. But Jase does not pay attention to him as she has forged documents.
She thinks it is better to leave New York alone for Iowa. As T. Padma points out:

Her main reason for running away is the fear that her presence in her household may jeopardize the safety of Taylor and Duff (quoted in Dhawan/Shastri[ed.]1994:82).

Jasmine does not want to put her ‘perfect family’ in danger. She is a perfect Indian woman who sacrifices for her beloved ones. The main reason for running away is, in fact, the fear that her presence in Taylor’s house may jeopardize the safety of Duff and Taylor. She does it because she cares for Taylor and finds have man-woman relationship with him. Her Indian-ness is well hinted at by Malashri Lal:

...Jasmine’s Indianness will insist upon a reverential, platonic love for “professorji” even when the altered emotions become obvious. Clinging to old pities despite her American exposures, (“Duff was my child; Taylor and Wylie were my parents, my teachers, my family”) (quoted in Awasthi[ed.]1993:60).

Thus Jasmine’s relationship with Taylor comes to an end abruptly. She goes to Iowa to protect herself from Sukhi with the help of Mother Ripplemeyer. Jasmine gets job in the bank of her son, Bud—“...a tall, fit, fifty years old banker, husband of Karin, father of Buddy and Vern”(14). Bud gets attracted towards Jasmine but she is totally blank. She never imagines that Bud would love her. Bud expresses:

I saw you walk in and I felt my life was just opening to me.
Like a door had just been opened. There you were in my bank, and I couldn’t believe it. It felt as if I was child again, back in the Saturday-afternoon movies. You were glamour, something unattainable. And you were standing there with my mother (199).

Jasmine’s life takes a new turn. In this regard, Nagendra Kumar observation seems pertinent:

It seems that Bharati Mukherjee uses fate and chance as a ‘problem solving device’. In her use of this device there is something like a “fairy tale.” Bud not only gives her new life but also a new name- Jane (2001:114-15).

Jasmine’s relationship with Taylor grew slowly. But Bud seems to be lucky. For him it took just six months. Jasmine says, “Six months later, Bud Ripplemeyer was divorced man living with an Indian woman in a hired man’s house five miles out of town”(14). She doesn’t marry him legally, but with his divorce with Karin, she comes close to Bud, even develops physical proximity, which results in her pregnancy. People assume that they are married. She accepts the new concept of live-in relationship like an American.

When two companions begin their lives under one roof without the support of the legal institution of marriage it is said to live-in relationship. It enables the lovers to understand each other thoroughly. Though such relationship is not allowed in Indian culture and tradition, it has gained world wide recognition especially in the countries like America. It is
getting rooted in Indian society as well. The Maharashtra government has proposed a change in the legal definition of a ‘wife’ to ensure justice for women who are denied the legitimate rights of a spouse despite living with their partners for a reasonable period. It has developed out of necessity. In the modern society one has to perform multitasks which leads to numerous problems and tensions. In such a situation, one cannot afford to live for the long time with the loved one and bear the whole responsibility. This may be one of the reasons in the growth of this relationship which is explicit in the following quotation:

The Live-in relationship can be used as a pre-parital arrangement to find out the compatibility of the partners. Which is a fallacy. The very essence of marriage is understanding and adjustment, which cannot be expected from the Live-in relationship. By accepting to a live-in relationship the couple agrees that they are not in favor of any adjustments and understandings. Live-in relationship is an act of escapism from responsibility. The marriage calls for some responsibility from both the partners. The present generation has less sense of responsibility and the live-in relationship is one of the manifestations of that lack of sense of responsibility


It is an escape from the responsibilities. It is true that the trend of live-in relationship is the outcome of the necessity of time. Jasmine the protagonist accepts to live with Bud just because of the necessity. Both of them needed each other desperately.
Jane settles down to a peaceful life in Bud’s house, happy in her new financial security and her new step mother status with regard to Du, a sixteen years old Vietnam war victim adopted by Bud, after his grown up sons left the house and he is separated from his wife Karin. Bud, like Taylor, is impressed by Jasmine’s Indian dutifulness. Though Jasmine adopts herself to the patterns of the dominant American culture, she keeps certain Indian culture and religious belief as a part of her life. Jasmine as C. Sengupta says that, “maintains certain basic traits of Indian culture even after imbibing American culture” (quoted in Dhawan [ed.] 1994:165).

About her Indianness S. Shivkumar observes:

It is her Indianness, strangeness and dutifulness that attracts everyone she came into contact with. Her vulnerable condition, the years of training in different culture based on sacrifice, submission and acceptance is what makes her attractive to the men in whom she finds comfort (quoted in Pathak[ed.] 1994:216).

Jasmine is fortunate, her Indianness is warmly welcomed by both Taylor and Bud. Like an Indian wife, Jasmine serves Bud tiredlessly. She prepares bed for him; undo his shoes; pulls off the pants; sponge-bathe to him; gives him medicines in time. She adjusts herself with every change while living with him, she says, “…he was active and inventive, very sure of himself. Now I must do all the playing, provide the surprises” (Ibid). She is both for him day’s ‘caregiver’ and night’s ‘temptress’. Jasmine
describes in detail their physical proximity. She says, “This is my turn to take charge. There are massages I must administer, pushing him on the prostate, tools I must push him up so that, at last on very special nights, he can ejaculate” (37). It shows that she accepts the fact and adjusts with the circumstances. In this context, Malashri Lal opines:

She insists upon sexual intimacy so that Bud may feel assured of his manhood (quoted in Awasti[ed.]1995:61).

Jasmine sacrifices herself like an Indian woman but does not intend to be his wife and laughs off whenever he pleads her to marry him. When she is pregnant, Bud always requests her to marry him before the birth of baby. He would like to proudly announce Bud and Jane Ripplemeyer. But she says, “Plain Jane I want to be” (26). She compares him to Taylor and always finds Taylor the perfect mate. It is quite strange that Bud is not interested in her past. He prefers Jasmine for her Indiannness and not her Indian past. Whereas Taylor was interested in her Indian past who enjoyed her Indian stories and Duff too is really impressed by Indian myth. Even then, Taylor never expects her as an Indian woman, meek and submissive. Conversely, he offered her the life in New York which fulfills her ‘American dream’. About Bud, she thinks:

Bud’s not like Taylor- he’s never asked me about India; it scares him. He wouldn’t be interested in the forecast of an old fakir under a banyan tree. But was wounded in the war
between my fate and my will. I think sometimes I saved his life by not marrying him (12).

Jasmine always feels sorry for Bud because she cannot fulfill his dream. Whenever Bud insists her for marriage, she remembers the prophecy of the old village astrologer who foretold about her widowhood and exile. Therefore, she does not marry him. However she feels that she has saved his life by not marrying him. She acts like a typical Indian ‘care-giving’ wife. She says laughing to Bud while leaving home. “I’ll wait for supper for you. Indian wives never eat before their husbands” (213). When he is out of station, she always phones him to enquire about his well-being. She is always haunted by the worries of his disability. Jasmine is grateful to Bud and does not repent for bearing his child. She says: “Bud has changed my life. I am grateful. I am carrying his child” (231). She feels fortunate when she compares herself with Hasnapuri people who have nothing but poverty. While she has all types of luxuries in America and she expresses, “I am triumphed” (Ibid). Her relation with Bud reveals that she is no more an orthodox girl from rural Punjab but now she is an American woman.

Incidents of her interactions with Karin, Darrel and Du occur at the end of the novel. Jasmine becomes restless and prepares to leave Bud. Karin makes her realize that she is living with the man who spoiled his
family. Jasmine admired Du in trying to take charge of his life. She also observes the cowardice of Darrel who tried to run away from the problems of life by committing suicide. Jasmine is surprised to receive a letter from Taylor who is preparing to come to her with Duff. T. Padma’s remarks seem significant when she says:

Taylor’s arrival at this juncture is welcome relief to her and which he in his winning way convinces her that there is nothing wrong in her leaving Bud, she feels reassured and consents to go with him and Duff to the west coast, may be California, “greedy with wants and reckless from hopes” (241) (quoted in Dhawan[ed.]1996:167).

After some initial hesitation, Jasmine accepts Taylor’s proposal to go to California when Taylor convinces her that, “It’s a free country” (239). Karin, too as her genuine friend, assures her that the decision to leave Bud is right and she should not blame herself, “Don’t blame yourself Jane” (240). Usha Anand’s comments about Jasmine’s separation from Bud appear just:

...she cuts her cables with Bud whose child she is carrying without any feeling of guilt and switches her loyalty to Taylor easily. The case is of a piece with her earlier discarding of Prakash’s memories. The past recedes more and more into the remote unusable past and what matters are the present moment and the promise it holds for the future (quoted in Jain[ed.]1998:217).

Jasmine confirms, “I am not choosing between men. I am caught between the promise of America and old world of dutifulness” (240). It
is not her frivolous act but a decision taken after deep thought as she puts
“The moment I have dreamed a thousand times finally arrives” (237). The
sudden arrival of Taylor gives a sense of relief to Jasmine. Taylor offers
her to go with him to California. As an Indian woman she would not have
deserted Bud, but it is perhaps the Americanness that has made her to
accept Taylor’s offer. She feels no guilt when she walks away from Bud’s
life, she only feels pity for him:

It isn’t guilt that I feel, its relief. I realize I have already
stopped thinking of myself as Jane. Adventure, risk,
transformation: the frontier is pushing indoors through
uncaulked windows. Watch me re-position the stars, I whisper
to the astrologer who floats cross-legged above my kitchen
stove (240).

T. Padma says that, “Jasmine has indeed achieved self-actualization
in America” (quoted in Dhawan [ed.] 1994:178). About her acceptance of
the proposal of Taylor Malashri Lal has remarked:

Jasmine tumbles tearfully joyfully into Taylor’s arms,
“reckless from hope.” She abandons her crippled lover, her
life of sacrifices and compromises. She sees her choice of
Taylor in terms of India and America

The novel ends with Jasmine’s decision to step into future with
Taylor and Duff. Her analysis of her relationship with Bud shows that
there is a clear distinction in her mind between living with someone
separated from his wife and deliberately breaking up a home. She says,
“Bud would have left Karin or twisted in mid life until he dropped. I was a catalyst. Not a cause” (200). She mocks successfully at the astrologer by showing the reposition of her stars. The man-woman relationship in the novel seems to be affected by fate and chance. It develops out of one’s need to belong which Jasbir Jain rightly points out:

There is always a need to belong that remains unfulfilled, and which neither love nor sex nor the two together can satisfy. A great vacuum remains inside the individual, an empty space compelling the individual to recognize the separateness. Yet friendships outside marriage create their own problems (2003:88).

Jasmine progresses through her strong will power. She reaches California from Hasnapur but remains unsuccessful as a woman, her progress remains superficial and she carries a shifting identity as Malashri Lal opines:

In case of Jasmine the adaptations are rapid but superficial. She never outgrows the India of sharply divided gender roles. As an extra indicator we watch her compliance in the name giving tendency of men. Called Jyoti by her parents she acquires a new name from each “husband” (she timidly refuses to call them lovers) she is Jasmine to Prakash, Jase to Taylor and Jane to Bud. In her turn she has been “caregiver” to them all shading whatever side of her personality might be distasteful to each (quoted in Awashti[ed.] 1993:62).

The woman who surrendered to Prakash to be moulded according to his ideas is the person who wants to be shaped according to the
American way of life, and secure a place as legal wife to an all-white American. In spite of being a foreigner, she tries to cope with American culture. Her becoming ‘caregiver’ to every man she comes in contact with, despite her own needs, affects the man-woman relationship.

The two protagonists, Indu and Jasmine are rebellious right from their childhood. Indu rejects to follow Akka, a rich widow and the only provider of her family while Jasmine rejects to follow her future predicated by an astrologer. Both Indu and Jasmine get attracted towards the men whom they marry. Indu marries against the wish of her family; however Jasmine marries with the consent of her family. Both are issueless but the reasons are different, Indu does not beget a child because she is aware of her insecure relationship with her husband, Jayant. Jasmine’s husband rejects to offer her motherhood because of her not reaching puberty, but at last she is pregnant from Bud, her patron in America. Indu has an extra-marital relationship with Naren, her cousin which is an outcome of her emotional as well as sexual suppression. Helpless Jasmine lives with Bud and Taylor after the death of her husband in an alien country out of her need to adapt herself to the changing circumstances. She loves Taylor and chooses him at the appropriate time. Both are partially dependent upon their husbands for economic purposes.
Indu earns but it is too little to make her the bread-winner of the family. She is career-conscious and earns to secure her self-pride. Jasmine too earns but it is out of economical necessity and not out of self-pride.

Indu is educated and serves as a writer and journalist while almost illiterate Jasmine serves as a sales-girl, day-mummy and caregiver in America. Indu is motherless and sole child from middle-class urban joint family while Jasmine is fatherless and comes from a lower class, migrated and rural family. Both do not have a playful childhood. Indu builds up personality of her own by overcoming the adversities but Jasmine has normal rural childhood which leads her to marry before reaching the age of puberty. Both face the bitter experiences right from their early childhood. Jasmine loses her husband within a year of her marriage but her strong will power leads her to U.S.A. She passes through many ordeals to fulfill the dream of her loving husband and finally settles abroad. Indu is rebellious in some aspects but unnaturally submissive to Jayant whom she loves extremely. Jasmine is submissive to Prakash. She follows him silently. She is a dutiful wife to her patron, Bud though he does not marry him. She shows her feminine urge by choosing Taylor, her personal feelings overcome her dutifulness at last Taylor loves her very much and she too loves him. He is the person who offers her equal
opportunity and opens the new and free world of materialistic America. Jasmine shows the change in her attitude by transforming her submissiveness into a free will. Indu feels rootless, which is incidental and overcomes it successfully each time. Indu lives in her own country but Jasmine goes abroad. Both of them do not skip the traditional Indian ways. Indu is a modern woman though she sticks to tradition and Jasmine can’t get rid off her Indian mindset though she lives in America.

Indu goes back to her husband after her brief stay at her parental home. She gets an opportunity to think upon her marriage from distance. She gets much help from Naren to understand it. She finally arrives at conclusion to secure her future with her husband only. It is her strong resolution that makes her take this step. She is not a traditional woman who thinks woman’s place is at her husband’s feet. On the whole, the only thing that makes her to go back is her insecure feeling. In this sense, she proves herself to be a typical Indian woman who craves to be protected. Well-known playwright Vijay Tendulkar’s character Miss Benare experiences the same in his play Silence! The Court is in Session. In an interview with Vanmala Vishwanata, Shashi Deshpande accepts:

Most women are still very emotionally dependent on the family—they want to be good daughters/wives/mothers always. A man wouldn’t think so much about it
Similarly, Jasmine goes to Taylor to seek her future because she spends her life’s most happy days with Taylor only. Lastly, she has an opportunity to choose between Taylor and Bud. She chooses Taylor who offers her many opportunities and asserts her feminine needs, takes charge of her life and emphasizes her inner strength which Madhu Kishwar, the feminist calls, “self-conscious...arbiters of their own destiny” (Kishwar:1985:20).

In this sense, she chooses that secure future, which offers her security as well as her free will. Bharati Mukherjee admits in her interview with Runar Vignission:

In case of Jasmine and in case of me its, again we sometimes want to change...I want to think that Jasmine is very real feminist ...Jasmine feels deeply, she’s intelligent she knows exactly what she has suffered and she is able to change her life, the stakes are not as great for the strong feminist in my work (www.Span-34-5 ‘Diasporas’).

On the whole, it seems that Indu and Jasmine, at last, think of their security and lead their way accordingly.