Chapter – IV

MARITAL RELATIONSHIPS
Family (marriage) from the inception of human life on the earth is considered to be the most incredible institute of society. The family consists of many relations like husband-wife, mother-daughter, daughter-father, and sister-brother. In all these relationships the relationship between the man and woman has always occupied a central place. Mutual understating, love, faith are the basic pillars in the relationships. The problem arises when they are one-sided. They break the relationships. A relationship can grow if one begins to look at ones partner in a positive and appreciative light and is ready to accept the other with all his/her good and bad points. Unless the both partners work together a marriage cannot be a success.

The institution of marriage is the central feature of all those forms of human society. Marriage is the deepest and most problematic of all human relations. Marriage, in India, is an important social institution. It is considered as the most essential part of human life. Marriage is supposed to be the holy union of two souls and bodies. It is the foundation of the family which is the social group consisting of parents and children. Sociologists define marriage as a cultural phenomenon which sanctions a more or less a permanent union between partners conferring legitimacy on their offspring. The Bible says “The Marriage is honorable in all”.(Hebrews, 13-4) Hindu marriage however is a religious sacrament in which man and woman are bound in permanent relationship for the physical social and spiritual purposes of sexual pleasure, procreation and observation of ‘dharma.’ In marriage, oneness, companionship and mutuality are stressed and it is assumed that the interests of the husband and wife are one, that whatever is for the benefit of the one is for the benefit of the other also.

The man-woman relationship in the modern context has undergone a change. Formerly, the Indian woman was only a shadow of man. She had not any individual identity. Now days the relationship seems quite changing. The women are considered equal to men. But the situation is not totally changed. The society till is not ready to give an equal status to woman. She is still treated as an object.
The marital relationship is a recurring theme in literature. The fiction has focused on this theme “bringing about social awareness, unraveling the changes in the social sphere and the effect on it of several subterranean forces. As Seema states “Literature also reflects” the complex interpersonal relationships between men and women, the social conditioning in their formation and vis-a-vis and an author’s attitude to these relationships.” (Man-Woman Relationship in Indian Fiction, p.8)

Many writers have written about the predicament of women against the changing social, cultural, political, economic background. But few writers have mainly dealt with the theme of man-woman relationship in their works. Anita Desai, Jai Nimbkar and Shashi Deshpande are some of them. As a matter of fact for instance Shashi Deshpande’s novels are the antecedents of the theme.

Shashi Deshpande has expressively described the subordinate position of women in husband-wife relationship, which often annihilates their rights as human beings. Through her novels and stories, she suggests that marriage often tethers women to the conventional feminine traits leading to their subjugation, yet she does not believe in annulment of marriage or family bonds. She is an ardent advocate of harmony and human values in family as well as in society. She insists on the treatment of women as companions rather than as subordinates in husband-wife relationship.

The novelist has revealed the true picture of husband-wife relationship in the contemporary Indian society in which men play the role of a dictator and aggressor and women oscillate between their traditional and modern roles. Her works also reveal how different moral codes are set for men and women by the society. All her protagonists are not happy in their married life because of varied reasons. The system of traditional marriages subjugates women and leaves them unprotected to their husband’s tyranny. Simone de Beauvoir in her essay Second Sex writes: “Marriage incites man to a capricious imperialism; the temptation to dominate is the most truly universal, the most irresistible one there is; to surrender the child to its mother, the wife to husband, is to promote tyranny in the world” (p.483).
Husband-wife relationship has been taken up as a major theme by Shashi Deshpande in most of her stories and novels. She reflects that within this relationship women’s identity, dignity and individuality have been sidelined. The stories project that women can be emancipated by challenging and changing the established social doctrines in which men hold the position of the master and women of the slave. Indu in Roots and Shadows contemplates and communicates a remarkable statement and a fascinating question after all inspection of the early women inside their marriage in her vicinity. She says: Behind the façade of romanticism, sentiment and tradition, what was marriage after all, but two people brought together after cold-blooded bargaining to meet, mate and reproduce so that generations might continue? (Roots and Shadows, p.3)

Whereas discussing the women’s condition in marriage dowry system and purdah system cannot be ignored. If both husband and wife are considered equal, the evil like dowry system, standing like a cobra to engulf our society by stinging its pangs, should be abolished. It is terrible and intolerable act for which Indian society is responsible to the more extent for its flourishing just for grinding its own axe. Women are also the human beings they also have the same rights which men had. The concept of Dorothy Purker about the man and woman is having rationality in itself. He assumes the human beings beyond the man and woman, it cannot be just to books which treat of woman as woman her idea is that all the people men as well as women should be regarded as human beings.

Marriages are consummated in India after satisfying the demands of the groom’s family. It is because of this system that the birth of girls is not welcomed by most of the Indian families. Dowry system is the root cause of the budding of certain other evil practices not only in India, but in some other societies too. Bertrand Russell writes that in some countries like Japan, “Prostitution is recognized and respected as a career, and is even adopted at the instance of parents. It is often a not uncommon method of earning a marriage dowry” (Marriage and Morals, p.102).

Dowry system in India has led to many tragic and untimely deaths of girls and brides. The humiliating position of girls in contemporary Indian society is pointed out by Vrinda Nabar in Caste as Woman:
The ordeal of getting a girl married off has acquired grotesque dimensions in Indian society. Female foeticide/infanticide is among its most tragic manifestations. If the girl survives either of these fates, other horrors await her. The more bizarre consequences of this continuance of a rapacious practice are seen in the suicide of the three young sisters in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, who hanged themselves to escape the misery and humiliation of being born in a family, which could not afford to provide them with suitable dowries. They are also seen in the ‘sale’ of innumerable young Muslim girls to aged Arab visitors who sexually exploit and then abandon them. (p.162)

Shashi Deshpande has exhibited the drawbacks of dowry system which has made the position of girls and their parents pathetic and miserable. Financially weak parents often accept any proposal of their daughter’s marriage that comes their way. In the novel *Roots and Shadows* Mini’s lackadaisical face makes it clear to Indu that she finds the match incongruous. But in order to save her father from further complexities regarding her marriage, she poses a semblance of agreement and decides not to show her dislike. Anant is satisfied that his daughter is finally getting married in a financially sound family and is not willing to try for any other better match. He states:

Another chance? We had to wait long enough for this one. Padmini is past twenty-four now. And there’s her horoscope. And the problem of finding a family with a status comparable to ours. And when everything clicks there’s the dowry hurdle. What am Ito do? Let the girl stay unmarried? (*Roots and Shadows*, p.51)

Women are toned to merge their aspirations and desires with those of their family. Mini describes to Indu about the efforts made by her Kakas and Kakis as well as her parents to wheedle and lure boys and their families. Every time they reject her, she feels downcast and blames herself for putting her parents in distress. She wishes to get married at the earliest in order to save her parents from the imbroglio of groom hunt. Indu contemplates on the position of women in India where they
have to play the role of reticent daughters and wives and absorb the trends set by their predecessors. She believes that women should assert their individuality. Troubled by Mini’s attitude, she contemplates:

What choices do I have, Indu? she asked me. . . . Millions of girls have asked this question millions of times in this country. Surely it was time they stopped asking it. What choices do I have? Surely it is this fact that I can choose that differentiates me from animals. (*Roots and Shadows*, p.125)

In the same novel Akka has been a victim of the evils of child-marriage. She gets married at the age of twelve to a man who is much older than her. Marriage stifles her childhood. The soul of a child withers when she cannot tolerate the scathing sexual advances of her husband. At a very young age, she has to satiate her husband’s physical advances. Narmada Atya, daughter of Indu’s grandfather, tells Indu about the torture inflicted on Akka after her marriage:

But I heard twice she tried to run away . . . a girl of thirteen. Her mother-in-law I heard, whipped her for that and locked her up for three days. Starved her as well. The child, they said, cried and clung to her mother-in-law saying, “Lock me up again, lock me up.” But there was no escape from a husband then. I remember her telling me before my own marriage was consummated, “Now your punishment begins, Narmada. You have to pay for all those saris and jewels.” But my husband was thank God, a decent man. (*Roots and Shadows*, pp.69-70)

Sexual marital sadism is vividly portrayed by Shashi Deshpande. Akka too is a victim of sexual exploitation in her marital life. She experiences a constant subject of rape in marriage. Akka is too young, a small and frail girl to face her robust husband. Consequently, he is drawn to other women. Akka finds the sexual act so painful that she prefers to be locked up in a room and starved rather than to go to her husband’s room. Criticism of patriarchy, especially to women is at its peak. In this novel, Shankarappa might be quite right in making the remarks that women are obstinate like donkeys and refuse to change.
Akka has to face the indifference of her husband as she represents the older generation. The older age group women have suffered sexual brutality, widowhood, drudgery etc. The violent sexual approaches of her husband make her life miserable. Engulfed by shame, humiliation and fear, she endures everything silently. Her husband is unable to gauge her disturbed mental state. Being a wealthy man, her husband also keeps a mistress. As a married woman, she is expected to bear children. But she faces many miscarriages due to “the kind of life she led” (p.70).

Since then, Akka learned how to dominate. She finally understands the principle of survival of the fittest and grasps full control of the family in her own hands. Akka returns to her parental home as a rich widow and since then saddles her family members as puppets. As a rich widow, she acknowledges her power over relatives and establishes herself as a dictator. Indu recalls Akka after her death as “ruthless, dominating, bigoted and inconsiderable” (*Roots and Shadows*, p.22). Her formidable authority never allows people to peep into her life and understand her. Akka represents those Indian women who are assailed by tortures, humiliations, physical and mental sufferings in their marital life, due to which in the later stage of their lives they become ruthless, callous and unkind, but nothing can atone for the previous wrong done to them.

Indu, the protagonist of the same novel is an independent and intelligent girl. She is proud of her logical and rational thinking and sets out to reform Indian womanhood. Indu strives to seek a new environment where nobody can exercise their wills on her. She marries Jayant a man of her own choice and leaves her parental home. In her very first meeting with Jayant she swept off her feet. He gives her a feeling of solidity and certainty. Being tied up in marriage with Jayant, Indu comes to realize that it is because of him her life is meaningful in one view and meaningless in another view. But she painfully realizes that she has just walked into another trap.

Indu feels that she was deceived in marriage and made to hide her feelings. And she wonders why she is trying to please him all the time, “have I become fluid with no shape, no form of my own”.(p.49). In relationship with Jayant, Indu suppresses her feminity and her human demands. She is physically and spiritually dissatisfied with her husband who takes her ‘for granted and expects her ‘to submit’.
Then I had met Jayant. And I had found that he too expected me to submit. No, not expected. He took it for granted that I would. And I did it, because, I told myself. I loved him. As if that justified everything. As if the word took away the taint from the dead. And remembering now I had surrendered to him, step by step, I realize now, that it was not for love, as I had been telling myself, but because I did not want conflict. The hideous ghost of my 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. (*Roots and Shadows*, pp.158-59)

Her love towards Jayant makes Indu to accept what he wants and does. The paradox of the situation is that Indu is not completely happy with Jayant, but at the same time, she cannot live without him. On the other hand, Jayant in spite of his seemingly western style of life behaves no different from an average Indian male. Her relationship with Jayant makes her feel that there was something shameful in total commitment. “It shocks him to find passion in a woman. It puts him off. When I am like that, he turns away from me I’ve learnt my lesson now. And so I pretend. And unresponsive (p.83)” Indu is like Vineetha of Jai Nimkar’s *Temporary Answers* in rejecting the idea of woman as inferior to man. Vineetha once again wishes to entrust her life into a man’s hands after her husband’s death.

Indu intentionally surrenders to her husband not because of love but to avoid conflict and she is afraid of failure and moreover she wants to show to the world and her family that she is a success. She resorts to deception by putting up a facade of happy married life which as she feels has taken its toll on her personality. She looks at marriage as a system which makes woman so dependent. She considers love to be a big fraud, a hoax, a trap-a process of making one humble and dependent. To her ‘sexual instinct’, ‘maternal instinct’, ‘self-love’, ‘self interest’ appear rational and meaningful. “Love, that’s a word I don’t really understand. It seems to me an overworked word.” She realizes, “the sexual instinct that is true. The material instinct that’s true too. Self - interest, self-love …they are basic truth.” (p.97)
Patriarchy considers self-effacement as the most important quality among women which encourages them to obliterate their true personalities. Vrinda Nabar writes in *Caste as Woman* that the woman moves:

Towards a more specific aim to approximate the ideal wife. If she performs this role well, she is exalted and praised even by men with allegedly radical views. I have frequently heard such men describe women in the following way: ‘She may not be particularly intelligent or interesting but she obviously makes a good wife.’ The condescending flavour of such remarks, the implication that being a ‘good wife’ is the one quality a human ought not to lack, limits the range of a man-woman relationship in marriage. (p.175)

Indu too unconsciously treads the path of the elderly women of her family which she has always resented. In the process of pleasing her husband she hides her desires and emotions “as if they were bits of garbage” (p.38). She even submits to Jayant’s decision of continuing with her job instead of resigning and concentrating on her writings she is genuinely interested in. He reminds her that they need money as they have a “long way to go” (p.17). Indu helplessly and unwillingly acquiesces to his decision and continues with her job. She states: To go where? I had not asked him. I had quietly gone back to work. Hating it, hating myself. Waking up each day and thinking. . . I can’t go on. Feeling trapped, seeing myself endlessly chained to the long dusty road that lay ahead of me. (p.18).

The crusaders of religion are not far behind to humiliate woman as all the religions of the World give sanction to female suppression by the male members of society, thereby perpetuating the myth of female servitude. Marriages are made in Heaven. So it should be an equal bond but the conditions of women in their married life are well known. Marriage is perhaps, the most complicated of human relationships. It is defined as a “cultural phenomenon which sanctions a more or less permanent union between partners conferring legitimacy on their offspring”. Marriages are not merely a social institution but it has an inextricable link to religion, which determines the code of conduct in marital relationship more or less extent. *The*
Bible categorically tells the woman. “Wives submit yourselves to their husbands as to the Lord”. I (Ephesians, 5-22)

In her novel *That Long Silence* (1988), Shashi Deshpande presents the story of man and woman from woman’s point of view; and of wife and husband, from the wife’s point of view. Completely enmeshed in the Indian family system that husband is a sheltering tree, and the happiness of wife lies in keeping her husband happy, Jaya, the protagonist has lost her authority as a human being. She has shaped herself to the wishes of Mohan. She has given up the job she wanted to take; the baby she wanted to adopt and the anti-price campaign she had wanted to take part in.

For seventeen years of her marriage, she successfully manages to suppress her feelings, as she thought it more important to be a good wife than being a good writer. She not only suppresses her writing career but also her association with her one time neighbor, Kamat. She adjusts to Mohan from all angles. She does not say anything or resist while changing her name from Jaya to Suhasini. Even her dressing and her appearance bring out Jaya’s taught values of the importance and necessity of stable marriage and family, family as security and as a source of emotional strength.

But after Mohan’s office begins to affect the affairs at home, Jaya realized that Mohan has lost interest in her. She also realizes that she is a non-entity in his eyes. Even in her family tree, she is shocked to see the name of women missing as it is a ‘patriarchal family tree’. The climax is reached when Mohan wants to use Jaya as a conclusion in the business crisis. Jaya’s aunt’s counsel and father’s advice-never to hurt Mohan have made her bear things without opposition and from then on, she begins to use silence as a strategy to avoid any confrontation. The bubble of this long silence gets so bloated that the unexpected crisis burst it.

She had been lulled into silence till Mohan was a ‘sheltering tree’. But the sudden inquiry against him makes her feel insecure. When she herself wanted a shoulder to rest, Mohan accuses Jaya and they get news that their son Rahul had disappeared while holidaying. She literally goes into a traumatic state during which her innermost thoughts, her fears, her doubts and all that she suppressed for the last seventeen years come out and undergoes a sort of catharsis. She had decided not to be passive and silent.
The other women characters presented also are the victims of gross gender inequality. Mohan’s mother and his sister, Vimala, too are such victims. Mohan’s father was a drunkard and used to beat her up and she made a living by cooking for wedding feasts. Kusum, Jaya’s mad cousin is a deserted wife. In spite of everybody’s opposition, Jaya takes care of Kusum, makes her normal but just before one day to go to her husband, Kusum commits suicide. Jaya’s help-maid Jeeja also is a victim because of her drunkard husband who used to beat her, as she could not bear a child to him. So Jeeja willingly accepts her husband to remarry and brings up their boy after their death in an accident.

Jaya, the female protagonist of That Long Silence, has to endure an incompatible and traumatic marital life. She is one of those lucky girls whose upbringing is free from social conditioning. She is taught to treat herself as essentially different from other girls. Her name also suggests a victorious woman. Jaya’s carefree childhood has become a part of her existence, while her husband Mohan has a traditional male psyche with all its oppressive cruelty and insensitivity. Frictions occur soon.

Mohan finds self-abnegation as strength in a woman as he has watched his mother suffering mutely and still carrying out her domestic affairs. In order to save her marital life from total collapse, Jaya submits before the hegemony of Mohan. Their relationship lacks companionship and Jaya is reduced to the status of a subordinate. Instead of love, care, affection and understanding, silence dominates their relationship. Jaya contemplates, “Like the chorus of Greek drama, we were distanced from suffering; for us there was just living—one foot in front of another, until death came to us in a natural form” (That Long Silence, p.4).

Jaya realizes that anger makes a woman ugly to Mohan. He expects his wife to be demure and coy. As a child she never controlled her anger and emotional explosions, but Mohan’s wary eyes made her keep a check on her emotions. She knows that while obeying her husband reticently she is not carrying out the idealized role of Draupadi, Sita or Savitri; rather she is urging her marital life to move forward without any frictions or tribulations. She concludes.
“No, what have I to do with these mythical women? I can’t fool myself. The truth is simpler. Two bullocks yoked together... it is more comfortable for them to move in the same direction. To go in different directions would be painful, and what animal would voluntarily choose pain?” (That Long Silence, p.11)

Gradually the submissiveness and silence strangle Jaya’s confidence in her. She learns merely to consent to a decision taken by Mohan. Even if Mohan approaches her to seek her advice, she finds herself perplexed. Assured of her unquestioning obedience, Mohan soon establishes a monopoly over her. Jaya sums up, “To know what you want, I have been denied that” (p.25). Mary Wollstonecraft too agrees that the strategic planning over the centuries has given men a better place in the society.

Ignorance is a frail base for virtue! yet, that it is the condition for which woman was organised, has been insisted upon by the writers who have most vehemently argued in favor of the superiority of man; a superiority not in degree, but essence; though, to soften the argument, they have labored to prove, with chivalrous generosity, that the sexes ought not to be compared; man was made to reason, woman to feel: and that together, flesh and spirit, they make the most perfect whole, by blending happily reason and sensibility into one character. (A Vindication of the Rights of Women, p.63)

Mohan believes that a wife should be submissive, servile and docile. When Mohan gets entangled in a problem at his office, he decides to move to the Dadar flat till the things settle down. Jaya does not want it but acquiesces reticently in order to avoid any altercation between them. She knows that her consent is not important for Mohan and is taken for granted. Jaya’s fortitude pushes her to an unending servitude. Mohan’s decision of moving into Dadar flat is preordained which needs no discussion with Jaya. Jaya recalls, “I remember now that he had assumed I would accompany him, had taken for granted my acquiescence in his plans. So had I” (p.11).
The growing silence between the two sequesters them apart leaving no space for emotional attachment or psychological understanding. They start living under the same roof not as a husband and a wife, but as strangers. Jaya concludes, “But the reality was only this. We were two persons a man and a woman.” (p.8).

Jaya wants Mohan to repent for his crime but his response is that he did it for the benefit of the family constantly echoes in her soul. She finds it hard to detach herself from the crime committed by her husband. She is unable to decide whether to follow her husband or to break her silence and question him. Jaya knows that her silence inadvertently supports the crime committed by Mohan and is responsible for erasing the proclivity towards each other, making their relationship feeble. She recalls the advice of Vanita mami who had compared husband with ‘a sheltering tree’ (p.32):

After so many years, the words came back to me. A sheltering tree. Without the tree, you’re dangerously unprotected and vulnerable. This followed logically. And so you have to keep the tree alive and flourishing, even if you had to water it with deceit and lies. This too was followed, equally, logically. But in Saptagiri we had a creeper that was watered and manured assiduously; yet it died of too much water, of white ants in the manure that destroyed its roots. (p.32)

After her marriage, Jaya had hurriedly adopted the womanly traits as followed by the women of her husband’s family. In order to appease him, she discarded those traits which could be interpreted as rebellious postures. During her first visit to Mohan’s place she learns how well defined a woman’s place was in his family:

I had discovered how sharply defined a woman’s role was. They had been a revelation to me, the women in his family, so definite about their roles, so well trained in their duties, so skillful in the right areas, so indifferent to everything else. I had never seen so clear, so precise a pattern before, and I had been entranced by it. (p.83)
Jaya is able to see the clear line of distinction that was laid between men and women in Mohan’s family. Men were totally unaware of women’s suppression and self-effacement. Shashi Deshpande talks to Lakshmi Holmstrom in an interview about the suppressed anger in women which is very common in Indian society:

“I don’t know, whether women have been very successful in concealing their anger, or whether men have simply closed their ears. This theme was very important in That Long Silence. The total lack of communication between men and women. For example, Mohan’s utter inability to understand his mother’s despair. He actually calls it courage. A young critic spoke to me once of the ‘tone-deafness’ that Indian men have cultivated towards women. And that seems to me exactly right. (R.S.Pathak p.249)

In order to please Mohan, Jaya tries to become a replica of the women of his family and forces herself to become an ideal wife and woman. She dedicates all her services towards her family. Although it never gives her total happiness, it saves her from guilt. She recalls how a mistake gave her remorse, and a word of praise gave her happiness. When she goes through her diary, she discovers that her mental and emotional undulations that always duelled in her psyche have no place in her diary. She also realizes that she is living without an aim in her life. Jaya states:

It’s essential core had been left out. The agonized cries I can’t cope, I can’t go on’—had been neatly smothered. As also the question that had confronted me everyday-is this all?’ The biggest question facing the woman of these diaries had obviously been: what shall I make for breakfast/ lunch/ tea/ dinner? That had been the motif of my life. (p.70)

Jaya is renamed ‘Suhasini’ after her marriage. The identity with which she had learnt to live is snatched from her. Rather, she is given a new name and identity, and a new environment, and she has to struggle to cope with it. A chirping, lively and enthusiastic Jaya is transformed into a grave, calm and stolid Suhasini. While
performing the roles of a wife and a mother and trying to fit in the expectations of her family, she teaches herself to accept this difference, “And I was Jaya, not Suhasini, who was distinct from Jaya, a soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman. A woman who lovingly nurtured her family. A woman who coped” (pp.15-16). The novel projects the Indian women who, while aping the image of ideal Indian wife, adopt self-abnegation. Vrinda Nabar too feels that the practice of changing name after marriage is a very subtle device to change the personality of a girl to de-link her from her past. She writes in *Caste as Woman*:

In some sections of Indian society, however, it is fairly usual even now for the husband to change his wife’s first name as well. Nothing could be more symbolic of feudal ownership than this unambiguous assumption that, with marriage, the woman’s entire past becomes separate and unconnected with her married life. Moreover, since a name may be seen as conferring a form of identity, distinctiveness, such a practice implies that it is the husband’s prerogative to obliterate his wife’s identity, if so he wishes, and to give her a new one of his own choice. (p.121)

Separated from her identity after marriage, Jaya passes her life without any excitement, thrill, motivation or encouragement. She concludes that to wait for the coming moment is the women’s destiny. Throughout their life, they wait for a moment which can provide an escape from their monotonous life. Men have been completely unaware of this traumatic and stifling part of women’s life, because they have perceived them merging their desires reticently with those of their family members. Jaya points out:

He did not know what waiting was. He had always moved steadily from one moment to the next. But for women the waiting game starts early in childhood. Wait until you get married. Wait until your husband comes. Wait until you go to your in-law’s home. Wait until you have kids. Yes, ever since I got married, I had done nothing but wait. Waiting for Mohan to come home, waiting for the children to be born, for them to start
Jaya had always wanted to become a reputable and successful writer. Mohan objects to her stories, as her themes seem to reveal their marital life. He wishes that instead of writing stories based on marital discord, Jaya should write popular articles on superfluous themes. Jaya accept it in the hope that it shall impart permanence to her marriage. She becomes scared of penning down the stories that were in her mind because she had been scared, “scared of hurting Mohan scared of jeopardizing the only career I had, my marriage” (p.144). Jaya remembers Kamat, her upstairs neighbour, who turns out to be her true friend. In Kamat’s company, her true self can blossom. She pours out all her thoughts and desires to him. Silence and subjugation that play a prominent role in her relationship with Mohan are completely absent in her relationship with Kamat. In an interview, Shashi Deshpande comments on Jaya’s relationship with Kamat:

Jaya is very much aware that with Mohan she is Mohan’s wife but with Kamat she has many things. She is that kid Jaya, a rebellious kid, she is a writer; she is a frustrated person who cannot write what she wants to. She can be angry with Kamat, with Mohan she cannot be angry because he does not like it. (Thakur, 21 August, 2001)

Jaya recalls that it is Kamat who turns out to be her professional mentor. He acts as a teacher, a guide, and never spares her writings that were full of flaws. Jaya’s problems are gradually curtailed by her frequent discussions with Kamat. Though a good listener, he always condemns Jaya for her weaknesses. She is amazed to see that a man and a woman can reveal themselves before each other without feeling guilty. Jaya recalls, “There had been an ease in our relationship I had never known in any other. There had been nothing I could not say to him. And he too. . .” (p.153).

Kamat asks her to overcome her inanities if she wants to succeed in her profession. He points out that she must overcome her complexes and stop posing as a deprived woman who has to toil like a slave, as this attitude was preventing her from pouring out her true self. Kamat points out:
Spare me your complexes. And you’re a fool if you think I was joking. I’m warning you—beware of this ‘Women are the victims’ theory of yours. It’ll drag you down into a soft, squishy bog of self-pity. Take yourself seriously woman. Don’t sulk behind a false name. And work-work if you want others to take you seriously. This scribbling now and then. (p.148).

Kamat wants her to overcome the winning attitude and attain a positive assertiveness in her behaviour. He criticizes Jaya for making her family a scapegoat for her failure as a writer. He points out that in reality she was “Scared of writing. Scared of failing” (p.148). Jaya’s relationship with Kamat could have solved her puzzled marital life if he had remained alive. During one of her visits Jaya finds him lying dead in his flat. Instead of paying her last tribute to him, she runs away out of fear of social criticism for maintaining intimate relationship with a man outside marriage.

The novelist has revealed the conservative norms of the society that always permit only those relationships to a woman which follow the socially ascribed rules. A married woman is morally bound to her husband only. Friendly relationships with other men are not permissible and are looked down upon with contempt. Shashi Deshpande on the other hand supports healthy human relationships. She states to Lakshmi Holmstrom in an interview:

But yes, I did bring in Kamat to serve a purpose: to show Jaya the kind of relationship that she could achieve with a man. She gets a kind of companionship with Kamat that she never gets from her husband. Yet that is marriage and this isn’t. But perhaps I do realise that kind of relationship, the kind of companionship that is possible, although it is very rare. Often it is missing, because of the predominance of the sexual motif in India, within marriage. *(Shashi Deshpande Talks to Lakshmi Holmstorm*, p.247)*

By recalling her past in her Dadar flat, Jaya is able to develop a proper perspective towards her life. She rearranges the different fragments of her life after
carefully analysing her past. She understands herself not only as a wife and a mother, but also as Jaya. She realizes that she has bucked her failures on Mohan’s shoulders. Even after Mohan’s objections, she continued with her writing. Jaya concludes: I hadn’t stopped writing because of Mohan; I could not possibly make Mohan the scapegoat for my failures, for I had written even after that confrontation with him—stories that had been rejected, stories that had come back to me, stories that I had hidden here in this house. (p.145)

With this thought she comes to understand the problems related with her marital life. Jaya realizes that she has to erase the darkness from her soul and mind that is responsible for creating emotional frictions. She understands that as the presence of light overcomes darkness, she can remove the darkness of her mind and soul by analysing her true self. Jaya has never negated family life. Now she realizes the value of leading an organic life. She learns that her fear of failing as a wife and mother has seized her independent thinking. She now decides to move forward in her life expecting a change in Mohan’s attitude. She knows that it is not easy to change oneself but she hopes that she can develop a better understanding with Mohan as a companion, rejecting the traditional silence of a wife.

All her emotional turmoil is pacified and she concludes, “I’m not afraid anymore. The panic has gone. I’m Mohan’s wife, I had thought, and cut off the bits off me that had refused to be Mohan’s wife. Now I know that kind of fragmentation is not possible” (p.191). Jaya appears confident as all her fears vaporize. The novel ends with her resolve to break her long silence. Jaya concludes, “But we can always hope. Without that life would be impossible. And if there is anything I know now it is this: life has always to be made possible” (p.193).

Jaya represents the commonest compromise available to a woman. As a person, as a novelist, Deshpande states that women should not try to escape the challenges of their professional life. In her interview to Pallavi Thakur, she comments:

To be a professional, you have to give a lot of yourself. That is where the problem lies, really, because you have to be ruthless. Like Jaya begins by saying you have to be ruthless.
You cannot have it all. So you have to give it 100%. Now that is where women really falter. And for that there are a lot of reasons, we are soft, brainwashed, our families come first, genuinely we want to give our children more attention. The solution is not to have children and marriage but that is not possible. For most Indian women to live alone is a very hard life. So each one of us is trying to find one's own way [...]. We all have to make compromises. To me it is important that I would never compromise on my professional excellence that I should give my best [. . ]. But the family and children are facts which most of us have to take into account.(p.194)

Shashi Deshpande’s *That Long Silence* is a contemptuous critique of Indian marital system which obstructs the free communication and expression of women. *That Long Silence* not only exposes the prevalent patriarchal practices of feminine marginalization, but also illustrates how their psychology has been toned by centuries of conditioning. Women unconsciously imbibe and follow the image of ideal womanhood, which in fact they have always resented.

In the novel *A Matter of Time* Kalyani’s school education is stopped though her father wants her to become an engineer. She is hurriedly married to Manorama’s brother Shripati without taking her consent and, “after this, Manorama felt secure. The property would remain in the family now her family” (p.129). Parallels can be drawn between Manorama and Saru’s mother in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* as far as mother-daughter relationship is concerned. Saru’s mother also exhibits hostility towards her daughter, but Saru manages to escape it, earning a medical degree and thereby establishing an independent stand. But Kalyani couldn't escape her mother’s ruthlessness and reticently obeys all her decisions. After her marriage, she gives birth to two daughters, Sumi and Premi, but celebrations are allowed only when a son is born, though later he develops as a mentally-retarded boy.

To Kalyani, happiness seems like a traveler making a brief sojourn in her life. The domination of her husband in her life has a traumatizing effect on her. Her pathetic state worsens when she loses her son accidentally at a railway station.
Shripati accuses Kalyani for deliberately neglecting her son because she could not manage him. He squarely blames her, not so much by words but through his withdrawal. Shripati resembles other male characters in Shashi Deshpande’s novels, particularly Urmii’s father in *The Binding Vine*, who wants to establish a dictatorial control and authority over their family members and do not tolerate any independent view.

Kalyani is sent to her father’s house where Manorama accuses her of bringing ill-fate to the family as her father dies soon after her arrival. Kalyani epitomizes traditional submissiveness and silence. She endures her mother’s callousness and serves her during her illness. At her death bed, Manorama calls for Shripati, which petrifies Kalyani: She stays awake at nights, terrified, walking out of fearful dreams when she did finally fall asleep, her body drenched in sweat. (p.153)

Shripati’s dominance and dictatorship leave no space for companionship in his relationship with his wife. After he returns, they start living together. Since then, Kalyani has been spending her life by serving her husband, whereas Shripati takes her services for granted and never notices her existence. The communication gap between them never gives Kalyani an opportunity to defend herself against the accusations made by her husband. Kalyani laboriously works in her house and looks after her children and husband. She passively accepts the humiliations inflicted on her by Shripati. She is sidelined in his life and is reduced to the status of a slave in her own home. *The Second Sex* has sympathetically presented the isolated subjugation of housewives as:

> Thus woman’s work within the home gives her no autonomy; it is not directly useful to society, it does not open out on the future, it produces nothing […] far from being the matron, her occupation makes her dependent on her husband and children; she is justified through them; but in their lives she is only an inessential intermediary […]. However respected she may be, she is subordinate, secondary, and parasitic. The heavy curse that weighs upon her consists in this: the very meaning of her life is not in her hands. (Beauvoir, p.175)
Kalyani too loses her self-respect in her marital life. She suffers mutely and gradually evolves a survival strategy by transferring her affection to her sister Goda, her two daughters and granddaughters. She represents those Indian women who cannot think beyond their marital life. They are conditioned to accept marriage as their career and trained to adjust and compromise even in the worst of humiliating situations. Shashi Deshpande’s description of Kalyani brings it out clearly: They don’t seem to realize that the real miracle is Kalyani herself, Kalyani who has survived intact inspite of what Shripati did to her. Kalyani has survived Manorama’s myriad acts of cruelty. (p.151)

Kalyani is never allowed by her mother to act according to her choice. Her upbringing gives her no opportunity to take her own decisions rather it encourages her to develop those traits only which would help her in carrying out her domestic duties later in her marital life without any independent thinking. Mary Wollstonecraft penetratingly writes:

> It is acknowledged that they spend many of the first years of their lives in acquiring a smattering of accomplishments; meanwhile strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves—the only way the women can rise in the world-by marriage. (*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p.10)

Kalyani too serves the family she finds herself in after her marriage. The socio-cultural patterns of the orthodox society have conditioned her and she has fatalistically internalized the idea of femininity. She is choice less and predestined to accept what life holds out to her. While Kalyani presents a particular facet of women who meekly surrender before familial cruelty.

Kalyani explains to her son-in-law, her own misery and the agony that surmounted in her heart all through. She implores Gopal not to do such a wrong thing with her daughter. She asks him what he has done to her daughter. She suggests let it not be happened to her daughter Sumi. Sumi knows why her husband Gopal left her and his daughters, because he had the fear of commitment and family ties and responsibilities. She knew that Gopal believed that “Marriage is not for everyone. The
demand it makes- a life time of commitment is not possible for all of us.” (*A Matter of Time*, p.69)

She remembers that, before their marriage, Gopal had proposed that, if, by chance either of the two wanted to be free, he or she would be left to go. There shall be no ties to tie them together. Reminding Gopal about this, she is agreed as she was only eighteen then and not too matured to understand the complications of life. She is conscious of the strange developments taking hold of him. Unlike others, she does not seek any explanation from him, but bears all the disgrace and humiliation. She knows that there is no external reason but the reason lies inside him.

With all the trauma of being a deserted wife, Sumi is more interested in getting on with her life and finding a meaningful existence. She neither hindered Gopal’s way of life nor hopped, for she understands that she has to live her life herself. Staying with her three daughters in her parent’s house, she feels like a parasite and determines to get a job. She knows that being a daughter is a disadvantage but somehow she manages. After getting a job, Sumi starts searching a house and luckily happened to pass the house of the student at whose press Gopal is working and with whom he is living, she meets Gopal. At this juncture of having met him, she feels that Gopal and she must move on alone and reconciles their separation:

> We can never be together again. All these days I have been thinking of him as if he has beer.i 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 more separately, two different streams. (p.85)

Sumi never questions Gopal, and he is grateful to Sumi for not asking questions and saved him from embarrassment and humiliation of voicing half-truths. Sumi hates to diplomacy Gopal’s analysis with anybody. Gopal, for that matter is an idealist, for he realizes the futility of existence and expresses. He repentances and expresses his feeling He discloses his awareness and meaninglessness of life and his loss of faith in it. He expresses to Premi the greatest wonder in this world is to see people die and yet we go on as if we are going to live forever.
Sumi looks at the desertion as ‘Sanyasa’, but the word ‘Sanyasa’ cannot be equated to the Vedic renunciation. Sumi casually makes a remark. When, one studies Gopal’s childhood to know the reason for his desertion, we see that Gopal’s childhood was not a normal one. He painfully remembers that his father had married his own brother’s widow, and he was born out of that marriage. In his adolescent period when he heard about this fact, somehow, his mind had not accepted this concept, and he thinks of several possible reasons for this marriage. He struggles a lot within and his predicament is parallel to hamlet’s frustrated state of mind. The thoughts come out of his mind repeatedly. On one occasion he recalls:

“It was when I read Hamlet, fortunately much later, that the most terrible version of my parent’s story entered my mind. Just that once, though for 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 complaint, a pregnancy and a child to come and then, after the husband’s convenient death (no, I couldn’t, I just couldn’t make my father poison his brother) a marriage of convenience.” (p.43)

Gopal left his Grihast-ashrama in search of eternal bliss due to the lack of, insecure childhood, understanding the true concept of happiness and ignorance of true quality of joy. Gopal tries to find out the solution to his alienation. He is unable to induce any one, the reason for his desertion, at least not to his daughter Aru. She, like the ‘Yaksha’, questions him and decides irresponsibility. To her “...not just a tragedy, it is both a shame and a disgrace.” (p.13). Even today, the woman fate is measured only through their marital status. A woman in a society is respected only if she has her husband, “What is a woman without a husband?” (p.167).

Gopal very easily burdens off his responsibilities as a husband and as a father of three grown up daughters. Sudha S. Balagopal in his Reviews Index explains that “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”.(monsoonmag.com)
The woman in the orthodox society contents herself thinking that her husband is alive, it does not matter whether they are leading a happy married life or otherwise. Sumi thinks of her parents, Kalyani and Shripati, who live like complete strangers under the same roof without any communication for more than thirty five years. Kalyani also feels proud that her Kumkum is intact and that she can move in the company of woman with the pride of a wife. Sumi fails to understand the meaning of such symbol. She thinks:

“It is 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 of his body against yours, the warmth of his breath on your face, the touch of his lips on yours, his hands on your breasts.”

(p.167)

The little girl Aru is astonished at the feeling of Kalyani’s happiness, like most of other women, on putting her signature as Kalyani Bai Pandit. It’s not so easy for a woman, separated or divorced from her husband, to start a new life. Although Sumi does not seek divorce yet she shows rare courage and self-confidence in trying to adjust in such a situation all by her. Generally, husband dependency syndrome makes the condition of a wife too miserable to separate from her husband either in his death or desertion. Gopal’s sister Sudha was very lively and active when her husband was alive. But after his death she becomes very irritable, self-centered and almost worthless it feels as if all the activity of her life has evaporated from her being a new woman. Sumi, after Gopal’s walk out, revises her creativity.

Sumi’s eldest daughter Aru often asks her to seek divorce from Gopal and advises her to meet a lawyer. She feels that her father should be made aware of his fault. Sumi rejects the idea because she knows that even if they sue Gopal and seek financial compensation; their family life will never become the same as it was earlier. For Sumi marriage is based on commitment and once broken, it can never be mended. She recalls his words: Marriage is not for everyone, the demand it makes, a lifetime of commitment—is not possible for all of us. (A Matter of Time, p.69)
Sumi reveals essentially a robust optimistic vision of life. She demonstrates strength and maturity even in adversity. She never wants to end her life like that of her mothers. She introspects her relation with Gopal in a more matured way and recognizes that Gopal’s life and its concept was always different identity from hers. The new fangled ideas of Sumi are obviously reflected in her thoughts. She contemplates on marital relationships and opines that these should be healthy, matching and non-aligned.

The role and position of Indian women have been just relegated to that of wives and mothers only. There is this unfairness deep rooted in Indian society towards women. This idea is very well illustrated with the marriage of Akka in *The Binding Vine*. She is forced to marry a widower with a child there are a number of instructions and warning that come to her, before the marriage, that, her prospective husband reminds his dead wife a lot and cannot come out of her memories, he is marring Akka, only for a want of a son. Akka from this marriage cannot expect anything. She has to give birth to a son. Listening to this story, Urmila thinks, “the cruelty, the enormous cruelty of that silenced us”. (*The Binding Vine*, p.47)

Stories like Saru, Jaya, Indu, Sumi, Urmia which describe the fate of many women, who are forced stoically to accept marriage under the pressure of societal norms. To women, till now, marriage is the only goal in the life of a girl and the most difficult and hazardous task on earth is to find a groom. Looking into all the difficulties and necessities Akka willingly agrees to marry Kishore’s father. The lives in the slums are nothing but another tale of woe. Urmila’s friendship with Shakutai gives her an opportunity to look into their lives. Shakutai’s husband goes to Bombay in search of livelihood; he for any reason doesn’t contact Shakutai.

Hence she is bored staying with her parents hence goes to Bombay to join him. Since her husband has no fixed job, they are forced to stay in their relative’s house. Life becomes quite humiliating. Shakutai is now a mother of three children, the burden of the family is completely on her. In spite of doing all kinds of work to support her family, her husband leaves her and children for another woman. Bearing the burden of such a worthless husband and struggling all alone to provide good life for her children, she finds herself always pin pointed as if something in the family goes wrong, she is made responsible she tells Urmila;
“What can you expect, they say, of a girl whose mother has left her husband? Imagine! He left me for another woman, left me with their children to bring up”. (p.147). Urmila understands that women like Shakutai, and Sulu are always haunted by the absence of security in their marriage. Sulu is affectionate and good-natured person who always tries to help her sister Shakutai. Despite resistance from Kalpana, she takes over the responsibilities of bringing her up. She has an inclination for housekeeping and decoration and this aspect in her goes unnoticed by her husband. There is the constant bidden fear in her, Shakutai tells Urmila about it:

“After marriage she changed. She was frightened, always frightened. What if he doesn’t like this, what if he wants that, what if he is angry with me, what if he throws me out...? Nobody should live like that, Urmila, so full of fears. What kind of life is it...?”(p.195)

The self-confidence of a normal girl can be shattered by the Indian institution of marriage system, which transforms Sulu into a fearful and nervous woman, can shatter the self-confidence of a normal girl. Shanti Siva Raman says, “Urmi is different....wants to assert herself and not crawl before man”(Women in The Binding Vine, p.136)

Urmila really not displaying any radical attitude towards the institution of marriage while talking to Dr.Bhasker but explains her clear-cut feeling on the system of marriage which is a necessity for women like Shakutai, because it means security, it provides safety from other men. Though Urmila has married a man of her choice, is far from satisfaction, her life sees incompatibility and withdrawing nature of Kishore. Vanna seeing Urmila associated with Dr. Bhaskar advises her to be careful. Urmila thinks:

“But how can Vanna, secure in the fortress of her marriage to Harish, Understand, What it is like marriage with a man who fits into my life a few months in a year and flits out again, leaving nothing of himself behind? Often, after he has gone, I find myself in a frantic grappling for his image, as if in going he has taken that away unwell”. (p.164)
Long separation from her husband, provides an opportunity to Urmila, to think of another relationship and there are a number of moments when she overcomes a longing for physical gratification. Dr. Bhaskar’s friendship provides ample opportunity to satisfy her urge, Dr. Bhaskar has already declared his love to her. Though she longs for physical gratification and comes close to respond to Dr. Bhasker, she just holds back and think, “It’s so much easier, so much simpler, to just think of virtue and chastity and being a good wife”. (p.166)

May be happiness in marriage is always magical, but to her mother, a constant pre-occupation with her husband’s feelings. Urmila rejects Dr. Bhaskar’s love, for she longs to have the marital bliss. This strong decision was not be taken firmly by Shashi Deshpande’s other protagonists like Jaya, Saru and Indu. Urmila never dares to cross the boundaries chalked out in the institution of marriage. Whether this good virtue in Urmila will ever be appreciated by her husband or not, but she loves her husband very much. She answers Dr. Bhaskar’s question, “I love my husband and therefore, I am an inviolate”. (p.164) J. P. Tripati, Commenting on Urmila’s relationship with her husband says:

“Urmila, the sailors wife and college teacher, is more self-reliant and has an identity different from that of her husband; she is self respecting and does- not want to live on Kishore’s money. She is however, a sensitive vine and need Kishore as an oak to entwine herself around” (The Binding Vine and Indian Ethos, p.152)

Saru in The Dark Holds No Terrors is fettered by her marriage to a man who has sadistic tendencies. In this novel she has touched the core issue of gender discrimination, as well as the trauma of women playing the role of a passive and mimetic life partner in their marital lives. These factors, which reduce women to the secondary position in society, form the mainstream of all these novels.

Saru meets severe retaliation from her mother against her decision of seeking a medical degree. For her mother, she remains a responsibility, which cannot be avoided as she is a girl and hence requires dowry to get married. Saritha is forced to seek her father’s support for her admission to the medical college. For the first time
her father is decisively on her side. Later she marries Manohar against her parents’ wish for which she has no remorse as she has withdrawn into her own shell. But Saru’s problems are further intensified by the chauvinistic attitudinal beliefs of the society which affect the husband-wife relationship too.

A woman, for getting freedom, seeks marriage as an alternative to bondage created by the parental family. Saru resents the role of a daughter and looks forward to the role of a wife, in the hope that her new role will help in getting her freedom. She marries Manohar quite against her parents will. She doesn’t feel any remorse at this separation but her childhood traumatic experience still haunts her.

Instead of getting her problems solved after her marriage, her problems get intensified by the male chauvinistic attitudinal beliefs of the society, which affect the husband-wife relationship. After her marriage, Manohar and Saru totally travel in opposite directions. Saru’s journey is from being a non-entity to become an entity. After getting first degree in medicine, completes, attends private patients and finally has a clinic of her own. She achieves each of these things on her own, without any support from her husband or father.

Shashi Deshpande discusses several problems related with women. There are several faceless wives in our male dominated society who do not even utter or register any emotion, but serve their husbands and his relatives and friends without a murmur. There are wives who have learnt to make clever yet clandestine compromise. Many a time, the boringly marriage kills the couple slowly, but more so, the woman is the worst sufferer.

Saru recalls her friend Smita who was an enthusiastic and carefree girl in college, yet molded herself according to the likes and dislikes of her husband after marriage. Like many other Indian wives she too learnt to go on with the new environment by subjugating herself. Smita’s name was changed to Anju after her marriage. Her embarrassing dependence on her husband made her timid: Saru criticizes Smita’s blindfolded proclivity towards her male counterpart. “Ah! There it is! ‘He’! There’s always time to do all the things ‘he’ wants to do, but never anytime for doing the things you want to do. You just tag on to him and drift, a small boat towed by a larger ship.” (p.117).
Smita does not have any freedom to spend money according to her desire and asks Saru to lend her some money. The girl who used to spend money lavishly during the college days had become financially dependent on her spouse and was going around with a begging bowl to seek monetary help. She states:

You know I came here for my nephew’s thread ceremony. He gave me just enough to buy a small gift for the boy. But I had to buy a sari for my sister-in-law as well. It would have looked very mean if I hadn’t. All the others did it. And four of us, the children and I, staying here for nearly a month. He doesn’t understand these things. He takes it for granted. I’m welcome here. Now if I tell him, I’ve bought a sari as a gift, he’ll be furious. So I thought, if you lend me a hundred. (pp.118-19)

Vidhya, had to give up her marriage to theatre, many other women are also portrayed, helping in the family as wives. Men also suffer, when they are pressurized into marriages they do not want. Saru ultimately realizes that marriage is not a guarantee of happy fulfillment. She thinks: “It’s easy to generate, she thought, and says she is better because she never married, never bore a child But that would be as stupid as calling me fulfilled because I got married and have given birth to two children”. (p.121)

Marriages normally subordinate the wives to the husband and it also idealizes female martyrdom. There is a subtle contrast with Manohar, for he had a happy childhood, He is a good-looking man; he is a poet, an orator, director of plays and a cult figure. After marrying Saru, begins to enjoy superior financial and social status. Both enjoy a harmonious relationship so far as Saru was only his wife. When she assumes the role of a lady doctor and he is recognized as her husband, the equation changes, he becomes a jealous; sexually aggressive husband. He can’t tolerate that his wife enjoys better social prestige and it gradually destroys their marriage. She feels that:
“The human personality has an infinite capacity for growth, and so the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps, the same thing that made me inches taller made him inches shorter. He had been the young man and I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband”.

(p.42)

A woman should know that success in marriage means manipulating, sacrificing, adjustments and silently managing her relationship with her husband in accordance with the norms dictated by the society. All her intellect, her carrier, her achievement, her ambitions—in case supersedes her husband, then, she must understand that they are the stigmas and she will have to carry like black mark forever.

Manohar’s sense of inferiority changes him into a sadist, who gets pleasure by insulting his wife, harassing and hurting her sexually. At the initial stage Saru cannot oppose, because, her mother had moulded her psyche to accept drudgery and self-negation as a norm of routine existence for a married woman and to treat herself as an undesirable person in a sub-conscious manner. Many a time she protests, her daily efforts estimate the limits of her misfortune, and her attempts to distance from Manohar is from the married surrounding, provide her with courage to overcome all the nightmares and accepts the naked reality. Understanding to reshape her life she is in the opinion that all is not, that has been exhausted. There is more to be faced, and hence her struggle towards a mere constructive nature holds on life to survive.

There are several women characters in the novel that are displayed as being entangled in the vicious web of marital life due to the dependence syndrome. Women are always judged by their marriage, as this is the destiny, “traditionally offered to women by society” (Beauvoir p.148). Saru recalls the faceless wives of Manu’s friends who do not register any emotion on their face. Engrossed in their servility they forget about their status, self-identity and self-respect. The only career they have is their marriage and they never look beyond it. Adjusting and compromising, they spend their lives like slaves.
They are faceless because after toiling hard throughout their lives and performing duties efficiently, their existence is not even recognized. Saru recalls her visit to a friend of Manu. She describes:

“The man sat and talked to us. The woman came in later with trays of food, cups of tea and glasses of water. She came in silently, unobtrusively, like a shadow and went out in the same way, her husband’s conversation not interrupted even by a fraction of a second by her presence. He did not introduce her to us, and so stray was the man’s disregard of her presence that we ignored her too. We ate our food, sipped the tea and gulped the water as if they had been brought to us by a nameless waiter in a hotel” (pp.58-59).

Shashi Deshpande has portrayed women serving in the background as wives, too insignificant to be noticed as individuals. Saru recollects that she too changed herself according to Manu. She was no exception and the sense of pleasing her male counterpart was present in her psyche too. The desire of pleasing the man is so strong that it drowns the true self of a woman. Saru contemplates:

Her abnegation to his tastes had seemed wholly natural at first. Now, for the first time, she found herself, waveringly, hesitatingly, making her way back to her real self. I, as I would like myself to be. But hunting for that real self had become rather like a dog scrabbling for a long-buried bone. Piles of earth flew up, but where the hell was the bone? or, had there never been a bone at all? (p.124)

Shashi Deshpande categorically states that the effects of social conditioning and dependence syndrome are responsible for placing women in the position of a puppet. She believes that women can be their true selves only if they transcend these limitations and use their potential to secure individuality and self-identity. Economic independence provides women the power of expression, which they have to sideline as housewives.
The Dark Holds No Terrors also touches upon the man-woman relationship within and outside the context of marriage. Shashi Deshpande believes that marriage sets restrictions on women’s life, as they have to suppress their desires and ambitions to keep the marital harmony. Once married, women’s lives are always determined, interpreted, and understood with reference to their marriage. Their existence is recorded in terms of the relationships and roles they pursue in their family. On the other hand healthy, friendly relationship with the opposite sex outside marriage is not regulated by the domineering male attitudes and allows women to believe in themselves and thus reactivates their potential and true capabilities. She explains in one of her interviews:

In a marriage relationship, I cannot speak of a man but I certainly can speak of the woman that much of you has to remain unexpressed. Because especially in our society women are expected of certain things which are not to be done or not to be said by women or you have to be certain kind of a person. So the real you vanishes. Whenever I see women talking about their past before marriage, when they were children, there is a kind of delight in remembering that person because that is the real you and after marriage the motherhood and wifehood both take away certain aspects of you .... as a wife you conform to a certain model, as a mother, parts of you remain unexpressed .... I think it is with the other sex that certain parts of you come alive and to me, a relationship with a male without the burden of sex and marriage is a very good relationship. (Thakur, 21 August, 2001)

In The Dark Holds No Terrors Saru enjoys her marriage till she achieves recognition and acknowledgement among her acquaintances and people around her. As soon as she surpasses her husband’s career, a discordant note occurs. In patriarchal culture, the development of women is restricted as they are acceptable only as men’s subordinates. Manu feels jealous of his wife’s professional success and his bruised ego turns him into a sadist. Saru, who was too exhilarated with “the dignity and
importance.”(p.42) which her image of a doctor imparted to her was soon assailed by fears and worries.

Her professional prestige and consequent social standing threatened Manu. He felt sidelined in the whole atmosphere of family and society. His wife was gradually holding the position of a man in the family, as her financial help was responsible for carrying out their domestic life. Her economic independence and superiority over Manohar become a stigma for her, as the society does not appreciate a woman who is more successful than her husband. A woman’s motives, aims and ambitions, which are independent of their married counterparts, are never valued by society because first and foremost it views women as daughters, mothers and wives, who should act as subordinates.

Thus any kind of superiority in women, whether it is economic, educational, or social, is treated as a transgression of the established norms. The pleasure of self-representation of desires is denied to women: they are cut off from any kind of pleasure that might be specific to them. Women are always judged first and foremost as women and their success in a profession is always considered secondary to their success in marriage.

“Saru also knows that her success in marriage means manipulating and manœuvring her relationship with her husband according to the socially accepted norms and flaunting it all the time. Her intellect, her achievement, her career, her ambitions-if they make her better than her husband-are the stigmas which she shall have to carry like a dead albatross” (p.76).

Shashi Deshpande’s novels convincingly depict how the society repulses women’s attempts to define their own life. They scratch and maul the psyche of those who rebel against these established norms, imparting a feeling of guilt to them. Saru realizes through her marriage that only a reticent woman, following the footsteps of her male-counterpart, can be accepted by an average Indian husband. Her own fears are reflected in her speech to the college girls when she ironically comments that inequality in marriage is a guarantee to a placid state:
Women’s magazines will tell you that a marriage should be an equal partnership. That’s nonsense Rubbish. No partnership can ever be equal. It will always be unequal, but take care that it’s unequal in favor of your husband. If the scales tilt in your favor, God help you, both of you. (p.137)

The complex web of the society does not allow a woman to achieve superiority over her male counterpart. Since ages she has been relegated to a secondary place. Women who have internalized the concepts of secondary status since their childhood find it hard to transgress this conditioning—those who transgress it are not socially accepted. Saru cautions the girls:

Have you girls seen an old-fashioned couple walking together? Have you noticed that the wife always walks a few steps behind her husband? That’s important, very important, because it’s symbolic. If he is an M.A., you should be a B.A. If he is 5’4” tall, you shouldn’t be more than 5’3” tall. If he is earning five hundred rupees, you should never earn more than four hundred and ninety nine rupees. That’s the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage. (p.137)

Shashi Deshpande observes that the society must abandon the minefield of femininity and femaleness and approach the questions of female emancipation from a different direction. Saru’s education and financial independence fail to curtail her miseries and traumas. Centuries of naiveness have made women diffident. Thus, even after gaining economic independence, they fail to secure an identity of their own. As Kishwar states: “Woman “as a wife; exists to serve the purpose of her husband. All aspects of her life are to be determined by this service role of hers” (*The Illustrated weekly of India*, sep 24, 1989: pp.10-19).

Saru decides to leave her job as soon as she got acquainted with the reason behind her husband's sadistic nature. She knew that it was the only way to save her marriage from total collapse. She states: The reasoning was simple, clear and remorseless. It is because I am something more than his wife that he has become what
he is. I can go back to being nothing but his wife . . . and yet was I ever that?... He may no longer resent me. And then.... (p.78)

But Manu rejects her idea of becoming a housewife, as it was difficult to run the house on his salary alone. Saru is unable to understand the complexity of her life. On the one hand she is not accepted as an economically independent wife who not only provides the bread, but also the butter to her family, and on the other hand she is not permitted to exist simply as a housewife. Thus, in the whole web of husband-wife relationship, Saru has been devoid of the liberty and freedom to think and act, which should be possessed by a human being.

Shashi Deshpande has exposed the true nature of husband-wife relationship, which is always unquestionably taken as a cohesive social unit of a family by the society. She has pointed out that the society has never taken cognizance of women as equals to their male counterparts. The picture of devoted housewives has veiled the true image of stifled and pathetic women who want their family to acknowledge their existence as equivalents to men. The novelist believes that the true self of women can burgeon only in those relationships in which they are free from the domineering and dictating rule of men. Such kind of relationship is seldom found within traditional marriages in the middle-class society, while outside the domain of family life it is considered to be a sacrilege for women.

Shashi Deshpande views such relationships sympathetically. Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* discovers her true potential in her relationship with Boozie. Her relationship with Boozie, her professional mentor, is that of a student and a teacher. The timely help and guidance of Boozie helped Saru in the beginning of her career. To Saru, Boozie was, “the fairy godfather who could, with a wave of his magic wand, make things easier” (p.92).

Manu never questions Saru for her growing intimacy with Boozie. He even overlooks people’s skeptical eyes, which looked at the relationship between Samu and Boozie with contempt. Saru knew about the rumours, which spread like fire among people about her rapid success and Boozie’s influence in it. Manu, being a man, received a severe blow to his ego. He develops a sense of inferiority under the impression that he is being sidelined in Saru’s life as well as in his family. But neither
Saru nor Manu spoke to each other about the growing silence between them. Saru's financial help to the family and his inability to tackle the whole situation turns him into a sadist. Saru’s better social position as a doctor destroys their marriage. Saru contemplates: And so the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps, the same thing that made me inches taller made him inches shorter. He had been the young man and I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband. (42)

In her relationship with Boozie, she for the first time experiences the charm of being an equal and not a subordinate and discovers her existence as a human being which was denied to her as a daughter and wife. In almost all her novels, Shashi Deshpande has portrayed a male confidant through whom the female protagonist realizes her true capabilities and weaknesses. According to the novelist, such kind of relationship between man and woman gives them a space to discover and accumulate their lost selves. They become better human beings with the power to express their desires and get strength to actively participate in life. Shashi Deshpande states in her interview with Pallavi Thakur about married women:

Sometimes with the family we are not completely ourselves. Like I said we are continuously restricted by their roles. I am so much the wife and mother here that I may not be able to express myself, my whole self. It's very rare with a marriage partner. With a marriage partner if you are able to do that it's a wonderful marriage. There is nothing like that because then there is a freedom of both friendship and the intimacy of marriage, both combined in that. Many times it is not possible. So it seems to me that a husband cannot be a friend most of the time. (from Self-effacement to self-actualization. p.120)

Shashi Deshpande advocates a healthy and nourishing relationship between men and women. Within its frame, women are not expected to make the compromises which they have to make as wives. They can exhibit and express themselves without guilt or remorse.
Ultimately the distance from her marital surroundings gives her ample time to analyse her plight and review her relationship with her husband. The novel suggests that in order to remove the clouds of ego, ignorance and emotional undulations, women should analyze their own self. Saru too is able to understand her traumatic past, which gives her freedom from the phantoms of her deprived childhood. It also grants her a cohesive understanding of the whole situation which leads her to understand the reality. She finally becomes sympathetic towards her brother Dhruva, who was scared of darkness. She realizes that in order to overcome her fears, she has to struggle herself and nobody can help her in doing that. She has to defeat the darkness inside her and not succumb to it.

The analysis of her past helps Saru to understand her true self. She discovers that though her male counterpart was dominating, her mute submission was also responsible for her suffering. Once again she decides to fight against the constricting forces. She realizes: “the terrors are inside us all the time. We carry them within us, and like traitors they spring out, when we least expect them, to scratch and maul” (p.85). She accepts her mistakes and weaknesses and decides to maintain her individuality in her relationship with Manu. She understands that it was due to her silence, submission and subjugation that Manu inflicted forced sex on her. She recalls her varied experiences and puts them in a proper perspective. She decides:

My life is my own. . . . Somehow she felt as if she had found it now, this connecting link. It means you are not just a strutting, grimacing puppet, standing futilely on the stage for a belief while between areas of darkness. If I have been a puppet, standing futilely on the stage for a belief while between areas of darkness. I made myself one. I have been whose substance has long since disintegrated because I have been afraid of proving my mother right. (p.220)

The process of scrutinizing one's beliefs enables Saru to find out the reason behind her suffering. She decides to shun silence and work out the hindrances of her life for betterment. She concludes, ‘All right, so I’m alone. But so is everyone else. Human beings…they’re going to fail you. But because there’s just us, because there’s
no one else, we have to go on trying. If we can't believe in ourselves, we are sunk” (p.220).

Shashi Deshpande has given her female protagonists strength and power of reasoning which is conducive to their development and emancipation, both intellectually and socially. They refuse to remain chained to the subordinate roles set by patriarchy. The novel expounds the need to change the established indoctrinations which have obstructed women's development. Shashi Deshpande also seems to propagate that a woman has to fight her own battle.

She has very appropriately quoted from the *Dhammapada* in the epigraph of the novel:

You are your own refuge;
There is no other refuge.
This refuge is hard to achieve.

It clearly projects that for sustenance one has to organize and depend on one’s own efforts. Thus one can say that women have to assert themselves in order to have an identity. While doing so they not only have to suppress social dictates but also have to acknowledge their weaknesses and realize their true potential. True analysis of oneself paves way for betterment.

Shashi Deshpande believes in the moral, intellectual, and social emancipation of women as well as men-she has no revulsion for men. She believes in healthy human relationships between men and women which must be based on companionship, and not on subordination. Women continue to be the sufferers in almost all the situations they face as the social norms and moral codes have been so framed as to be particularly disadvantageous to them. She writes not what she must but what she chooses, and as a very sensitive feminist writer, she knows the huge gap between men’s world and women’s world and wishes to bridge the two worlds so as to create a harmonious society of both man and woman.

The novelist has taken up diversion in theme in the later novels and marital relationship was not discussed much as in the earlier novels. In the next chapter an attempt is made to study the fiction of Shashi Deshpande with a new perspective
towards women. In all her novels there is an interesting thing to note that how finally
her women characters re-start life afresh with hopes of better tomorrows as they are
able to gain new thinking.