CHAPTER - II
Shashi Deshpande shot into prominence, as a novelist, with the publication of her first three novels, i.e. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *Roots and Shadows* (1983) and *That Long Silence* (1988). She immediately came to be recognized as a writer who responded to her milieu with a fine artistic sensibility, and rendered it in its subtle complexities in an incisive and captivating manner in her works. As a writer of modern Indian society, passing through a phase of transition, characterized by various forms of tensions and conflicts, Deshpande has presented it mainly through her focus on human relationships, particularly those within the institution of family. These novels give ample evidence that her major concern in her fiction is going to be the experience of alienation, a phenomenon inseparable from modern life. However, what distinguishes her from some other contemporary novelists is that unlike their works her novels do not present a somber picture of the world. She does present, with full force, human suffering, loneliness, powerlessness, disillusionment and anxiety in a milieu antagonistic to the sense of self-esteem of her men and women, their desires and dreams, personal impulses and ideals as individuals. But she never seems to present a nihilistic view of the world. On the contrary, she appears to endorse an attitude of mature acceptance with full knowledge of the realities of life. This drama of human existence characterized by tensions and conflicts between the forces of alienation and human impulse of affirmation of life, a theme that runs through all of her novels, captures the sense and sensibility of the readers of these early works.

An in depth study of this theme also reveals a broad pattern of similarities in these novels by Deshpande. As they represent the earlier phase of Deshpande’s creative art, all the three novels have simple plot and a small number of important characters around which the story revolves. The underlying idea is more or less the same in all the three novels. In these novels, Shashi Deshpande very realistically depicts how hypersensitive characters feel trapped in a milieu and circumstances that tend to be hostile to their personal aspirations and identities. Their search for fulfilment is thwarted by various
social forces operating mainly through the institution of family. In family, men are depicted as callous and indifferent who push their female counterparts (protagonists) towards alienation in its different forms and manifestations. Men too, have been shown suffering from alienating effects of the powers which seek to control their psyche and behaviour. But protagonists being modern, educated and aware of egalitarian values can neither accept it as natural nor can they initially fight against it due to their social and emotional conditioning during childhood. This conflict goes on intensifying in their minds until some sudden crisis turns their lives upside down and sets the process of self-introspection in motion. A particular pattern can be located in their journey during which they move back and forth in time. When the process of self-introspection is complete, the protagonists decide to change their way of life. In all the three novels stress is on the decision to change, rather than on actual change. It is a world of thoughts, not of action. In other words, affirmation of the characters is in nascent stage which has not taken any concrete shape in the form of actions. World of thoughts rather than action being prominent in these novels, the first person narrative, which gives primacy to the protagonist's world-view, is used in all of them.

THE DARK HOLDS NO TERRORS

The first published novel of Deshpande, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, is developed from one of her short stories named ‘A Liberated Woman’ published in 1978. Of all the novels written by her it is her “favourite” too. She told an interviewer, “It has simple theme and fewer characters that gripped me so much that I whipped through the writing. The wife had a better job and there was a very obvious tension between them. He was aggressive and surly. That set it off.”1 Thus, in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Shashi Deshpande tries to expose the problem of masculine ego that makes harmonious conjugal relationship impossible. The trauma of being the victim of her husband’s frustration that manifests itself in the form of sexual sadism is successfully presented by Deshpande through the example of Saru. Besides the antagonism in the personal relationship of Sarita and Manu, Deshpande recreates the horrible effect of the myth of preference for a male child on the psyche of a sensitive young girl. Saru’s life represents the alienating
effects of the apathy of the parents and the hostility of the husband. But these negative pressures urge her to construct her identity beyond socially accepted images.

In this novel Deshpande’s focus is on the role and significance of family in shaping, to a great extent, the psyche and attitudes of an individual towards self, society and life in general. Deshpande underlines the role of family in enabling a child to establish his/her bond with the society. Through its support system, family provides the child with emotional security, self-esteem and self-worth. In the warm and sympathetic environment of family the child learns how to establish cordial relations with other members of the family in particular and society in general. These relationships bring harmony in his life and provide him purpose of action. But if the family does not play its appointed role adequately then it can become the main reason of one’s stunted and unhealthy growth. And in the long run this kind of family atmosphere can cause feelings of loneliness, rootlessness, bewilderment and a sense of insecurity in a person.

Of all the familial relationships the mother-child relationship is the strongest and the most natural one because mother nurtures the child with her blood and milk. “It is out of the earliest loving bonds with the mother that the infant develops the beginning of a being for itself.” So the impact of mother’s nature and behaviour on the psyche of the child is the strongest one in his/her formative years. In a patriarchal set-up like the one depicted by Deshpande, the role of mother becomes all the more crucial and pivotal in shaping the personality of a child, especially the girl child. In Indian social set-up a baby-boy is sought after by the mother far more than a baby girl. According to Anandlakshmi, the reason behind this tendency is that the “birth of a son gives a woman status and she invests herself of her son’s fixture, creating a deep symbiotic bond.” Mother, who gives a boy child to the family, gets much respect and honour as opposed to the mother of girl child who gets sympathy or scorn of society. Giving birth to a girl child fills the mother with a sense of shame which she unconsciously transfers to her daughter. Resultantly, the girl is deprived of the maternal affection which disrupts the harmony so essential for her healthy growth. She grows with a distorted view of her own self which is presented to her by mother’s disliking. Such a pernicious home environment becomes the cause of psychological distortion and a girl faces many problems in establishing relationships and in adjusting with societal norms. Shashi Deshpande has very artistically depicted these
realities of the life of girl child in Indian society and has shown how discrimination against girl, particularly found in mother’s behavior, causes serious damages to her psyche, influencing her life not only as a daughter but also as a wife and a mother.

Saru’s mother, born and brought up in such a society, carries forward this ideology of discrimination against her girl child in the novel. She blatantly discriminates between her son, Dhruva, and daughter, Saru. Through her behaviour, gestures and actions, she clearly conveys the idea that a son is preferable for her. Sarabjit Sandhu remarks in this connection, “The mother is very much attached to her son. Her attitude is a typical one – after all, he is male child and therefore, one who will propagate the family lineage. In other sense, also, male child is considered more important than a girl because he is qualified to give ‘agni’ to his dead parents. The soul of the dead person would otherwise wander in ferment.”4 It is because of this thinking of her mother’s that a painful consciousness is forced upon Saru’s psyche in her very childhood that she is the daughter and not the son. Time and again she is made conscious of the fact that there is something which she lacks. She is resented and snubbed at every step by her own mother. Preference for Dhruva, her younger brother and neglect of Saru belittles her status in the family. Dhruva’s birthday is celebrated with much pomp and show while her birthdays are barely acknowledged. This type of rejection on her mother’s part breeds in her a feeling of being unwanted. Recalling her mother’s words she realizes that it was not the rain her mother complained about at the time of her birth but the fact of her being a girl: “But of my birth, my mother had said to me once ... ‘It was terrible.’ And somehow, it seemed to me that it was my birth that was terrible for her, not the rains.”5

This is how the element of love, so essential for the growth of self-esteem of a child, is denied to her by her own mother. William Walsh stresses the importance of love for the healthy growth of a child, which is clearly denied in Saru’s case, when he remarks, “The child’s consciousness, which is partial and successive, does not include a sense of past or the future. It has to be discovered and the provocation to learn it is love. Affection is the seed of time. It is love – intensifying the delight in the present and correspondingly bringing discomfort in absence – which introduces an element of permanence into the child’s experience.”6 Thus, love helps a girl to grow into a confident individual and enables her to negotiate life and its pressures in a balanced manner.
Without this a girl finds it difficult to integrate herself in relationships with others in family and society.

It’s not only that Saru is deprived of love by her mother, but father too fails to offer this succor of love and proves to be non-chalant. Both of her parents fail to present a role model to the child which she could depend upon and emulate in her relationships. Usually, mothers serve as role models for their daughters. They provide examples of how to be an individual, a mother and a wife. Generally fathers, however, instill in their daughters the sense as how to regard themselves, what to look for in a partner and what to expect of men in co-parenting relationships. The role of a father becomes all the more crucial if mother is non-responsive. In such a situation it is the father who has to play the role of a mentor, ensuring child’s psychological and emotional development. For this, a healthy communication between father and daughter is a must. But it requires sensitivity and understanding to share emotions, pains and anxieties on the part of the father. Only then he can offer her a comforting shoulder when she is in distress. This caring and loving father figure gives the daughter assurance of being loved and wanted. But this very emotional solace is conspicuous by its absence from Saru’s life even as a child.

In early childhood, communication is an effective medium through which an emotional bond is established between parents and children. Saru, as a child was deprived of the communication with her father through which she could develop a lasting emotional bond with him. This is evident from the fact that the reader hardly hears her in conversation with her father while Dhruva has long conversations with him. Like any other child she too makes every effort to draw the attention of her father towards her but to no avail. Every time it is her brother, Dhruva, who becomes the focus of love and attention of her father instead of herself. That’s clear from the way her father used to take Dhruva out for a ride leaving her at home. He would make Dhruva sit on the bar of the cycle conveying her the message that “daughters are their mother’s business” (105). This forces into her tender mind the painful feeling that she is unloved and unacknowledged. It plunges her into a crisis about her very identity. A feeling of worthlessness comes to possess her psyche which nips the budding sense of self, breeding a deep feeling of alienation.
Strained relationship between Saru and her parents and stifling home environment has its own detrimental effects on the tender psyche of Saru. In the observation of Mrianalini Solanki, partiality “serves as the foundation stone of her anxiety ridden personality.”7 Being a young girl she yearns for recognition but all the means of proper channelization of energy are repressed. This repression finds an outlet in violent moods. This pernicious home environment of hatred, hostility and lovelessness sows the seeds of rebellion within her. This rebellion manifests itself when she even as a child of tender age begins to harbour thoughts of Dhruva’s death and because of this unconscious desire she is held back from going to his rescue and he dies by drowning in the pond. This state of Saru’s mind is aptly summed up by Premila Paul when she says, “Dhruva’s demise had always been her subconscious desire and there is very thin demarcation between her wish and its fulfilment.”8

The death of Dhruva further deepens the cleavage within herself as it generates a great feeling of guilt, that she is responsible for his death. This feeling is further exacerbated by the repeated accusation of her mother: “You killed your brother. Why you are alive when he is dead?”(191) This feeling of guilt possesses her mind like a devil and renders it impossible for her to lead a life of equilibrium and normalcy. Unable to retaliate against her mother, the helpless child in Saru tends to withdraw into herself, thus feeling totally alienated from her family and immediate environment. It takes new proportions as she enters the stage of adolescence, a crucial period in the transition of a girl from the stage of childhood to adulthood. Adolescence is a time of many transitions. During these years, adolescents experience rapid physical development and heightened level of self-consciousness. They are very conscious about their looks. They rely more on their friends than parents. It is during these years that they try to establish an identity and autonomy. Moreover, this is the prime time for the development of sexuality. How teens are educated about and exposed to sexuality largely determines whether or not they develop healthy sexual identity.

In this period of stresses and storms, a mother assumes central place in a girl’s life. A healthy communication between mother and daughter alone can enable the mother to initiate her daughter in the wonderful world of womanhood. Not only the lack of communication but presentation of a negative image of womanhood to her daughter by
the mother and failure to establish an emotional bond with her also can lead to disastrous consequences, throwing the life of the girl out of gear. She may develop unhealthy attitude towards her own body and womanhood which she tends to identify with her mother. This negative attitude towards her own body and loathing for womanhood generates within her a conflict between her physicality, something given to her, and her developing ego struggling for independent existence, resulting in a feeling of alienation from her own body. This psychological turmoil is graphically and convincingly brought out by the novelist in her depiction of Saru in this phase of life. This begins with the frequent reminders to her by her mother that she is ugly, unwanted and undesirable. This causes so much of alienation from her body that she often longs for a miracle: "That one day I would grow up and be beautiful" (61). But when the physiological changes actually happen, she feels ashamed of her body as it puts her in the same category as her mother is in: "A kind of shame that engulfed me, making me want to rage, to scream against the fact that put me, in the same class as my mother. If you’re a woman, I don’t want to be one" (62). This is a classic example of how negative image and role of mother can push the daughter into an abyss of rejection and contempt for self.

This is made worse by various kinds of inhibitions imposed on the girl child in patriarchal societies. All these inhibitions crowd on her with the advent of womanhood. One of its inevitable consequences is manifested in the form of intensification of resentment against womanhood. It comes to possess her mind so strongly that she begins to feel estranged even from the normal relationships and experiences. Saru feels much embarrassed and agonised when she is advised by her mother to not to come out in her petticoat because she is growing up. This acute self-consciousness of her femininity created by her mother and exacerbated by the patriarchal milieu around her causes feelings of disgust for her womanhood: "And it became something shameful, this growing up, so that you had to be ashamed of yourself, even in the presence of your father" (62). Without the reassuring presence of a mother in adolescence the consciousness of physical change and the flood of new urges unsettle the growing girl. Monthly cycle comes as a trauma to her as she is treated like a pariah for three days. During this period even her entry in the kitchen and puja-room is forbidden. Instead of
developing a sense of love for her young and blossoming body her treatment like an untouchable makes her shudder at the natural biological function of her body.

This hatred for her female identity is aggravated further when she learns that she is nothing but a burden, a liability to be dispensed with by her parents. This tends to further undermine her sense of self as a human being reducing her to a mere object to be given away to someone else without her consent. An effort is made to instill feminine virtues and graces in her so that she could be an attractive commodity in marriage market.

Don’t go out in the sun. You’ll get even darker.

Who cares?

We have to care even if you don’t. We have to get you married.

I don’t want to get married.

Will you live with us all your life?

Why not? (45)

This conversation between mother and daughter shows that she is denied even the right to have a will and choice of her own about her future. This dispossession of self creates in her a feeling of being merely something meant for the use of someone else. Marriage, thus, comes to be seen by Saru as a challenge, a threat to her longings, dignity and freedom as a human being. These feelings of rejection, resentment and protest against her womanly destiny is typical of all patriarchal societies like the one in India and described by Kakkar when he says, “A daughter is an unmitigated expense, someone who will never contribute to the family income and who will take away her family’s fortune as her dowry.”9 Such patriarchal attitudes are often responsible for creating in women the feeling of utter helplessness and of being disappropriated. Resultantly, Saru begins to express her feeling through acts of defiance which spring from her resentment against her mother. The more she asserts herself in her acts of defiance, the wider grows the gulf between her and her mother. It is this irresistible urge to retaliate by wounding her mother’s feelings that she tells her how she in her dream saw her dead: “‘Yesterday night I dreamt you died I saw your body burning’” (143). This also shows her growing tendency to settle scores with her mother and draw a sadistic pleasure out of her mother’s
discomfiture. Again, it is this sadistic satisfaction which compels her to get admission to the medical college, the mother so doggedly opposed: "I had won. I could not believe it. I had won. But before I could speak, she burst out. 'I say, no, she can't go. Am I nobody here?""(144) It is clear that these actions have been instigated by strong impulses of reaction, and are not just the manifestation of her normal natural being. They have been taken to hurt the mother by trying to become what the mother never wished her to be. This is, in a way, more an effort to reject the mother than to assert her own genuine will and choice. This amounts to assuming an identity by negating the one, the mother seeks to impose on her. This aspect, which determines her course of life, is characteristic not only of her decision in her life as a child and adolescent but also as an adult. For example even the crucial decision of marriage with Manohar reflects the same forces at work in her behaviour.

Saru is conscious that her mother is highly orthodox and wants to cast her life in the mould of her own rigidly conventional attitudes charged with prejudice against the daughter. Moreover, as a traditional Hindu woman, her mother believes in caste system and cannot bear the marriage of her daughter with the man of any other caste. This proves to be one of the crucial factors which push Saru towards Manohar. Saru's decision to marry Manu, a low caste boy, seems to have received from critics rather a simplistic treatment. While critics like Premila Paul, K.M. Pandey and Nalinabh Tripathi have not said even a single word about this central event of her life. Barche has taken note of it without trying to peep into the causes at work in the deep recesses of her psyche. According to him, "Against her parents' wishes Saru married a boy from a lower caste. Her marriage to Manu is a sign of her turning away from the traditional ways and values her mother adhered to. She married to attain the autonomy of the self and to the secure love lost in parental home."10 According to the critic Saru is motivated by more liberal ways and values of modern educated girls. Certainly, Barche is right when he states that Saru turns away from her mother's orthodox ways but he does not go into the causes behind this decision of Saru's. It is important to note that Saru later on in a mood of retrospection and honest confession admits, "If you hadn't fought me so bitterly, if you hadn't been so against him, perhaps I would never have married him" (96). It clearly hints at the fact that she is driven to marry Manu more by reaction and sadistic rebellion.
against her mother than anything else. The desire of revolt overpowers her to such an extent that she takes the decision of marrying Manu even when she is not economically independent and both of them are students. The social and temperamental disparities, which always have the potential to sour and destroy the marital life easily, are totally ignored by her resulting in her frustrations and sufferings.

Saru is so obsessed with what the mother said and did to her that it bedevils the whole of her life even as a wife. It is evident from the way she is haunted by what the mother predicted about her marriage:

Love marriage.

I know all these love marriages.

It's love for few days then quarrels all the time. (69)

She cannot forget her mother's words, "You won't be happy with him. I know you won't" (98). Because of these negative predictions by her mother she silently suffers in her unhappy marriage. She does not turn to her parents for support only to prove her mother wrong and to vindicate her decision of marriage.

It mars her marriage in another subtle way by creating in her the lingering sense of insecurity about the future of her married life. Though she has married Manu out of her own choice and though she is extremely happy just after her marriage, a feeling of insecurity is always there that a day will come when she will come to know that she was never loved by anyone: "...and still for long the fear was there, the secret fear that behind each kiss laid the enemy, the snake, the monster of rejection. Sometimes, someday, I thought the truth will come out and I will know, I was never loved" (66). Probably it is due to this hidden fear in her unconscious that she devotes all her energies to her profession as a doctor, which could provide her economic independence and power over others. As Premila Paul observes, "Saru is highly self-willed and her problems ensue because of her outsized ego and innate love for power over others." But this desire to exercise power over others has roots in her psyche which have been largely ignored by critics like Premila Paul. A deeper insight into her mind and her past experiences reveals that behind this ambition to have power over others lies in her unconscious a deep rooted
sense of insecurity. It is through her success in her profession that she seeks a sense of self-assurance. It is also an unconscious effort to subdue the fear of being left in lurch by Manu.

Ironically, this singular pursuit of her career, which results even in her neglecting, sometimes, her husband and children, becomes the main cause of the marital disharmony and estrangement from her husband. The novel shows that the growth of Saru as a doctor results in disparity in their social and economic status which plays havoc with their marriage. It starts with the explosion in the factory near their first residence. Together with the mutilation of human bodies it brings forth an explosion in their marital bond too. Medical attention provided by Saru to the patients elevates her status from the young bride to a venerable lady doctor and Manu is reduced to the status of a doctor's husband. Young and callow as she was, she felt too exhilarated with dignity and importance on account of “nodes and smiles, murmured greetings and namastes. But they were all for me, only for me. There was nothing for him. He was almost totally ignored” (42). Engrossed in her newly found dignity, she fails to note the change in his tone and the indifference in his attitude. The same self-esteem which made her inches taller made him inches shorter. The conflict between her “achieved position and the ascribed position of Manu” undermines their marital happiness, sowing the seeds of disenchantment. The egoclash becomes inevitable when she acquires a position of being more than his wife and he remains as he was. This reversal of traditional positions of husband and wife is too much for patriarchal psyche of Manu, her husband. Saru, too realizes painfully that the reversal of positions i.e. \( a + b = b + a \), is true only in algebra but never in husband wife relationship: “But here \( a + b \) was not, definitely not equal to \( b + a \). It became a monstrously unbalanced equation, lopsided, unequal, impossible” (42). Thus, through Saru, Deshpande highlights how emancipation and success for woman in the patriarchal Indian society can cause subversion of roles in the family and destroy happiness.”

The Indian male psyche finds it very difficult to tolerate that wife should overreach her husband in any field. He wants to be the master of the house and wife to be the follower. Observations of A. Rich are as true of Manu, an Indian male, as they are about men of any other patriarchal society: “Men by force, direct pressure or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education and the division of
labour, determine what part women shall play and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male." Rich suggests here that any reversal of these roles is perceived by man as a challenge to his conception of his sense of superiority and manhood. Manu as a product of this patriarchal structure feels hurt and marginalized by Saru’s getting centre stage in family and social life. This injury to his male ego stirs up in him a complex of instincts – insecurity, jealousy and an urge to subjugate her to his superior power and place as a man. The lid is blown off this simmering pot by a reporter who comes to interview Saru for a magazine and innocently asks Manu, “How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?” (200) This question comes like a bolt from the blue for both Saru and Manu. On the one hand it mutilates the already hurt ego of Manu and on the other it opens new horizons of fear and horror for Saru. It is due to this irresistible urge to repair his wounded self and to punish her for usurping his role of a provider that he resorts to physical assault on her in bed that night. This nightmarish incident is repeated with increased brutality every time because for him it is the only alternative to show his superiority over Saru.

All this goes to show clearly that, through the character of Manu, the novelist skillfully lays bare the subtle and different forms of feelings of alienation, he, as a typical male has to suffer. He feels completely dispossessed of the image of self as a man he has been carrying in his psyche as the husband of Saru. The secondary status to which he has been reduced by the social and economic superiority of his wife is also too painful to be acceptable to his male ego. Moreover, it even erodes his sense of pride in his manhood and resulting in his alienation from the very core of his humanity revealed in his earlier behaviour as a loving and caring husband.

Deshpande exposes artistically how the stranglehold of traditional roles and images tends to alienate individuals from their deeper and authentic self, both men and women. If the reversal of roles plunges Manu, as a man, into a state of psychological crisis, it also has equally disruptive and wide ranging repercussions on Saru’s life. It brings various pains with it for Saru: pain of loss of self-respect, pain of physical torture and pain of mental trauma. In the beginning love and sex were fulfilment of life for Saru, but now sex has become ‘a dirty word.’ She starts hating her own body which was once a source of intense joy. Now it is just ‘a dark, damp, smelly hole.’ All her inner sentiments,
sensitivities and self-identity has been trampled and crushed by his ego. His ego and actions humiliate Saru to such an extent that she feels herself helpless to do anything against it: "Perhaps the process has already begun and what I am is a creature only half alive. And it seems I can do nothing to save myself" (96).

The word pain brings a kind of transformation and the physical pain becomes a form of internalization of social guilt. It forces her to rethink about her role and place as a wife. She begins to feel that in her pursuit of professional success she has neglected her duties and roles traditionally expected of a wife. The quickening of feelings of guilt is a natural consequence of this realization. This contributes to her silence on this issue. Moreover, she has the fear that by speaking "she would be unlocking the door of a dark room in which someone had been murdered ... And, her greatest fear was that they would all know the dead body to be his, her husband's. They would known too what she herself did ... that it was she who was the murderer" (44). She feels so humiliated by Manu's act of violence that she cannot summon up the courage to mention it to anyone lest the world should know about it and her love marriage be deemed as unsuccessful: "She could not, would not, draw aside the curtain that hid it from the world" (97). Revealing her problem to anyone seems to her as impossible and indecent as removing one's clothes in public. She resorts to this defense mechanism to save her face and prestige. She keeps silence on the issue lest her mother should come to know and her prediction, that love marriage is for a few days, might prove true. She also fears that if her children come to know about it she would never be able to look them in the face again. To get out of this hell she even thinks about divorce but turns it down because her middle-class upbringing makes the word 'divorce' a dreadful stigma. So she shuts up the skeleton in the cupboard and forces herself to construct a make-believe world. She suppresses all her pains, fears and horrors. She wears a mask of happiness and feigns marital harmony and peace which is a clear manifestation of alienation not only from her husband, friends and family but even from her own authentic moral, intellectual and psychological being.

This treatment of Saru's feeling of estrangement and fragmentation, delineated by Shashi Deshpande, is certainly an important element of the novel's structure, but like any other major writer she has depicted the predicament of this woman to highlight the general lot of woman's experience in patriarchal societies. She, in order to achieve this
end, has created a number of other female characters who in one way or the other serve to reveal various forms and degrees of experiences of alienation in different situations.

As against Saru, who has to suffer because of imbalance between career on the one hand and marriage on the other, there is her friend Smita, who is full time housewife and yet is a classic example of female alienation in traditional set-up. She is highly educated like Saru yet she has to make a compromise by going for an arranged marriage. Instead of discovering and realizing her own self in relationship with her husband, she submits to him so completely that she appears nothing more than a mere shadow of an authentic human being. Acceptance of new name, ‘Gitanjali,’ given to her by her husband, is a fine example of how she is dispossessed of her own identity and forced to assume the one created and imposed by her man. In this state of complete self-abnegation, she lives only for the sake of others – husband and children. She is reduced to the status of a woman, dependent for everything upon her husband like a poor slave. This helplessness comes to the fore when she has to beg one hundred rupees from Saru for her personal need: “You don’t know how lucky you are not to have to ask anyone for money. If you knew my problems...” (19). These words of Smita lay bare the intense pain and emptiness of a woman’s life who feels forced to put on a mask of a happy and satisfied wife and mother.

Deshpande shows that the traditionally submissive attitude and behaviour of a woman can be a cause of self-obliteration not only for herself, but it can have equally disconcerting and disjunctive consequences for her male counterpart also. It happens particularly if there exists an incompatibility of minds and temperaments between the husband and the wife. If Smita has to suppress her sense of being in her efforts to pretend to be a happy and comfortable wife, the similar attitude and behaviour of the wife of Padmakar creates an unbridgeable chasm between the two. Padmakar, in the novel, is not at all contented with a wife who is totally submissive. He was forced to marry against his wishes by his father who needed his wife’s dowry for his sister’s marriage. So the very foundation of this relationship is based on force and pressure rather than liking and genuine love. Moreover there is a wide gap in their temperaments, intellectual level and outlook towards life. Being educated, he wants his wife to behave like an independent partner, but she, in line with patriarchal tradition, is a meek follower of her husband. She
never eats before her husband and talks only about servants, children and prices. True communication between them is absent. A kind of aloofness and distance from each other can be sensed in their relationship. Padmakar has to carry the burden of this relationship which is devoid of love and understanding. He feels trapped in this relationship and feelings of loneliness and vacuum overpower him. To get out of this loneliness and boredom he tries to establish relationship with Saru, a clear symptom of his alienation not only from his wife but also from his own self.

If marriage is the reason of alienation of Saru, Smita and Padmakar, then the denial of this (marriage) becomes the main cause of Nalu's bitterness and disenchantment. Nalu, a lecturer, is Saru's childhood friend who decides to remain unmarried. She has a feeling of contempt for this institution which compels her to stay away from marriage. This suggests that there is some personal experience or her knowledge of some other woman's misery in marriage which has embittered and driven her away from this relationship. The reasons behind her decision have been left to reader's imagination. Be it fear or scorn for the institution of marriage, she denies the fulfilment of her biological, psychological, moral and social self through this experience of marriage. This underlines the unstated divorce which she has to effect between her natural energies, desires and needs as a woman on the one hand and the pattern of life she imposes upon herself in her spinsterhood on the other. As a result, she grows into a frustrated woman who is not in harmony with self. If on the one hand she is a victim of inner discord then on the other, she is a representative of lonely, fault finding and discontented lot, alienated from the whole world around. Close marital relationships which can serve as good source of self-growth and establishment of communion with society are absent from her life. The discontent, which is a natural consequence of such a life of negation and denial, is further reflected in her relationship with others in her milieu. That's why, she always complains about her family, her students, colleagues, administration of college, politicians and government. There is, in her, a lot of bitterness "ready to spring to the surface at any moment" (121). Saru tries to reason out her bitterness: "...she is bitter because she never married, never bore a child. But that would be as stupid as calling me fulfilled because I got married and I have borne two children" (121).
Shashi Deshpande's treatment of the malady of alienation is not limited to the younger generation alone. She exposes it as a phenomenon of the life of the people of older generation as well who also suffer from the same boredom, loneliness and disappointment in their relationship. In the novel two representatives of older generation, Saru's mother and father have been presented as examples of this category suffering from feelings of alienation and loneliness in different forms. Deshpande, in her novels, has depicted a wide range of ways in which deep seated feeling of alienation manifest itself. It is revealed in the form of boredom, disappointments, self-abnegation and mechanical activities. It also finds expression in the form of, sometimes, over assertive and even aggressive manner. This type of behaviour can be interpreted as an unconscious attempt at camouflaging deep rooted feelings of insecurity and fear, impelling such men and women to clutch at ways and means of self-assurance in a rather desperate manner. Saru's mother, in the novel, is a classic example of how a woman, suffering from an acute sense of insecurity and rootlessness, puts on the armour of domineering and nagging wife and mother. The reason for this tendency to impose herself on others lie in her unconscious lack of self-confidence. The unconscious effort to have a confidence in herself to control her situation and her world, leads her to assert her will and power over others. She, being a strongly opinionated woman, does not evoke sympathy from the reader. However, Desphande evinces a remarkable understanding of human mind, and humanises her characters by establishing a pattern of cause and effect in her portrayal. This makes her treatment of human life and behaviour more realistic and powerful. The germs of this aspect of the life of Saru's mother can be traced back to her childhood experiences. She is daughter of a deserted wife who had to take shelter, with her two daughters, in her father's house. The plight of the mother gave to her in her very childhood a taste of woman's helplessness. She also experienced the fears and insecurity as a child; unprotected by love and care of the father. The need for a protecting male figure and the concomitant fear of being deprived of it takes the shape of an urge to realize it through domination and control over others. That's why, she becomes authoritative as a wife and coercive as mother to Saru.

This fiend of insecurity in her psyche is further evidenced by the inordinate love she has for her son, Dhruva. This excessive love for her son is in direct proportion to the
value attached to the son in her patriarchal culture. In her world, it is through son that a woman gets status, respect and dignity. She is expected to give male heir to continue the line. Thus, it is through him, she seeks security and protection in her later life. All these factors work subtly in the psyche of a woman like that of Saru’s mother in male dominated society. She prefers her son Dhruva even at the cost of Saru and her husband. She alienates herself from Saru through her discriminatory behaviour. Her love and affection tilted so heavily in Dhruva’s direction that it proves disastrous for her after Dhruva’s death. She feels so devastated and broken that she sinks into a kind of nothingness, unable to relate herself positively to anyone, not even to her husband and daughter. That’s why, her relationships even with her husband fail to give her any succour or emotional solace when she feels overwhelmed with bereavement and loneliness after Dhruva’s death. Both husband and wife appear to be strangers with almost no real communication with each other. She becomes so withdrawn and apathetic that her marriage becomes a mechanical relationship: “... their bedroom was simply her father’s room in which she slept for night like a guest” (136).

Her husband’s house offers her no sense of belongingness and she seems to have as Saru says, “no room of her own” (135). Like a woman of typical patriarchal set up, her space is confined only to the kitchen. It is there that she spends most of her time silently going through the motions of routine womanly activities in a mechanical manner. It is significant to note that she is not heard complaining about it or making any demands upon her husband. This is further indicative of the loss of her interest in life and the absence of the feelings of warmth and relatedness to her husband. She feels so lonely and disconnected from everybody around that she doesn’t ever talk even about her illness. It seems that she has accepted loneliness as her essential condition: “... Yes, that’s what all of us have to face at the end. That we are alone. We have to be alone” (194).

The malady of her person becomes authentic to the reader only when one discovers that Deshpande has depicted her as a woman who is a typical product of patriarchal milieu. All aspects of her behaviour are explained by her situation as a woman characterized by feelings of insecurity, deeply entrenched in her psyche. But strangely enough it is this pattern of cause and effect of alienation which has tended to elude the notice of her critics like K.M. Pandey, Nalinabha Tripathi and Premila Paul. They have
tended to describe her only as domineering without going into the causes of it. As a result, they have failed to notice how Shashi Deshpande has humanized her character and has rendered her as a product of man-dominated society.

Deshpande suggests that the phenomenon of loneliness is not limited to any particular generation, class or gender. If women of older generation like Saru's mother offer insights into this predicament of their age and sex, Saru's father is a fine example of how men, too, are afflicted by this malady. He appears to be a stoical, resigned, indifferent, and flowing-with-the-current type of personality. He talks very less and suffers in silence. It seems as if he has curbed his will and something has gone dead in him. Passivity is the hallmark of his nature. He never asserts his will which is a clear manifestation of alienation. There seems to be a vacuum in his life which he hides with a tight lipped attitude. He does not express it openly because he is a man. His male ego is stifled. There is not much growth of ego so that he can assert. Reasons of his stifled ego are not clear. The very fact that there is no word about his past gives rise to suspicions that something deleterious to his growth of self and ego might have happened in his formative years.

Though he is passive, he is not a coward. He faces every situation and person without reacting to them. He carries on with his domineering wife until her death. He fulfils all the duties of a husband, but he seems to discharge them in a way which can be described as rather mechanical. That's why, a wide gulf appears to separate husband and wife in this case. Most of the time he remains silent and rarely takes interest in her affairs. This attitude of non-interference distances him from his wife and children. Saru takes him to be a person of weak personality who is unable to take decisions. That's why, he cannot earn the respect and love of his daughter. As far as his wife is concerned he himself confesses to Saru that they never talked like man and wife.

Silence is also the hallmark of the relationship of Madhav's parents. Here the situation is the reverse of what it is in the case of Saru's parents. Here, father is domineering and everyone in the family fears him. He is too aloof and imprisoned in his own egotistical self. There is not even a semblance of human communication and understanding between him and members of his family. His wife is too scared to dare
even to talk to him even when Satish, runs away from home. He remains so distant and imperious that there is hardly any sign of filial bond between him and his children.

It is evident from the analysis of men and women in Deshpande’s novels that alienation takes different forms in the marital relationships. It shows that the psyche of these men and women, so rigidly conditioned by patriarchy, hardly allows them to connect themselves to each other in a mutually satisfying and fulfilling relationship, which could give them genuine feelings of love and belongingness. It relegates women to the secondary position by elevating man to the dominant one. This age old inequality has conditioned the psyche of man so much that he is unable to shun his ego and step down from higher pedestal to the level of equality with his wife. Women too, are not able to come out of their myth of secondary status and do not feel at par with their male counterparts. This results in her failure to establish the required communion, and personal, moral and emotional growth of partners is rendered impossible by the role moulds in which man and woman are cast by their socialization. Imprisoned in their prescribed patterns of attitudes and behaviour in marriage, they fail to achieve the experience of oneness with each other at emotional and spiritual level. It is for these reasons the characters of Shashi Deshpande seem to suffer feelings of alienation in marital relationships. But Shashi Deshpande is not against the institution of marriage. Rather, in line with Simone De Beauvoir, she is of the opinion that a fine balance should be struck by both man and woman between their roles in marriage and their independent identities: “When the two partners recognize each other as equals and … if both the man and woman have a little modesty and some generosity, ideas of victory and defeat are abolished: the act of love becomes a free exchange.” But when they fail to recognize each other as equals, they are destined to suffer like Saru and Manu. The harmony is impossible unless both of them contribute to it by shunning their rigidities as man and woman. That’s why, if Saru’s marriage fails, it is not only because of Manu but also because of Saru’s failures. Instead of facing the situation squarely she tries to take refuge in extra-marital relationships.

If Shashi Deshpande brings out the maladies of the married life, she, with equal insight, shows that the relations outside marriage are equally susceptible to failures, frustrations and disappointments. Here, Saru’s relationship with Boozie and Padmakar
appear to be quite revelatory. Saru's life of emptiness and lovelessness drives her to seek fulfillment in relationships with Boozie and Padmakar. This is apparently an effort to fill up the inner vacuum in her life as she herself admits that it would give her an escape route to lead her out of her loveless trap: "Wasn't it always a solution for a woman who found no happiness with one man to try and find it with another?" (132)

Saru is motivated in the first instance to have a relationship with Boozie mainly because of her calculated efforts to win his help in advancing her career. Saru's euphoria about love marriage starts fading as the time passes by and she is compelled to lead a life of deprivations. She realizes that only love is not sufficient for living happily but one also needs money, a good house and all comforts to lead a happy life. She knows very well that she with an MBBS degree in hand and Manu's meager salary, won't be able to achieve that kind of life. One man, who can make things easier for her, if she is able to please him, is Boozie: "And there he was, the fairy godfather who could with a wave of magic wand, make things easier, miraculously, wonderfully, easier for me... if only I could please him" (92).

She becomes successful in her efforts to please him and in return she climbs the ladder of professional success very speedily. She establishes this relationship initially without a feeling of guilt as she thinks that theirs is a teacher student relationship and Manu won't object to this kind of relationship. But later on, in a mood of introspection, she realizes in her heart of hearts that Boozie's interest in her is as a woman and not as a student. Still she continues the relationship and compares it to Pygmalion-Galatea story. Like Galatea, he teaches her all the complex mannerisms of sophisticated life. Moreover, he financially helps her in establishing her own clinic. In return to his favours he starts taking liberty with her by displaying it through physical gestures like hugs, slaps, holding her hand etc. Boozie's advances towards Saru are equally calculated as those of Saru's: "... if she was a pawn in his game, so was he in hers" (98). On a deeper exploration one finds that if Saru tries to use him to advance her career, he uses the opportunity not for any genuine pleasure for its own sake but in order to fill up the void in his own life. It is noticeable that the aura he creates around himself and immaculate mannerisms he adopts are just a veneer to cover his complexes borne out of his middle class connections. Through his willful display of liking for pretty girls, he tries to hide his despair born out
of his homosexuality, a behaviour taken to be "queer"\textsuperscript{16} in social context. Through the example of Boozie, Shashi Deshpande has very suggestively provided insight into the troubled psyche and socially determined patterns of behaviour of an individual with homosexual tendencies, a subject treated as taboo in traditional and moral ethos. Boozie is fearful, frustrated, and full of despair because of this deviant behaviour of his and desperately tries to hide it from the world. But he fails miserably in his effort that becomes clear during Saru's visit to his home. She has in fact planned this visit intending to get from him some advice regarding Manu's sadism, but she is disappointed to see, "fine hair-like cracks in the image he had built and presented to the world" (98).

Boozie, weary of his pleasant mask, fills Saru with utter disappointment. She realizes painfully that he is not the same confident and self-assured person but is only a man with this 'uneasy face, an unwilling smile, a wilting, strained joviality' and 'the man who was floundering himself'. She now feels that this self-alienated man cannot provide any remedy for her failed married life. Thus, her relationship with Boozie reveals multiple dimensions of alienation both for man and woman. It brings to light the loneliness and self-negation, resulting in deep despair of a homosexual. It exposes, at the same time, how hopes to find contentment in relations outside marriage are elusive for a woman. This illusiveness of the fulfilment for Saru, a woman, is not only because the man, Boozie, she turns to, is a homosexual but it appears to be rooted deep in her personality. That's why, her relationship with Padmakar also is equally disillusioning and disappointing.

Saru turns to Padmakar impelled by her deep feelings of loneliness in a loveless life, which she seeks to overcome by the thrill of an affair. Her establishment of relationship with Padmakar is deliberate and calculated as she herself admits, "I had met him, smiled at him, listened to him. And now I knew it had not been thoughtless on my part. I had done it deliberately, coolly, with calculation..." (132). In the beginning, she enjoys spending time with him. All is well until their relationship is limited to being friends only. But by and by as he becomes more and more demanding and starts taking interest in her as a woman, she feels panicky and tries to avoid him. Padmakar, frustrated in his own married life tries to seek happiness in the company of Saru and tries desperately to win her favours but Saru is hesitant in maintaining the relationship. She is
hesitant not because of fear of consequences but because of futility of running after an illusion called love: “What had I imagined? Love? Romance? Both, I knew too well, were illusions, and not relevant to my life anyway” (133). This complete reluctance to pursue the relationship on Saru’s part proves equally disastrous for both. For Padmakar, this relationship, instead of filling up the vacuum created by his married life, further deepens his feeling of loneliness and despair. And Saru’s illusion of getting happiness through other men is completely destroyed, leaving her ‘alone in the middle of nowhere’.

These extra-marital relationships, depicted by Shashi Deshpande, are established between adults and are controlled by societal mores and customs. Emotional compatibility and sex are the deciding factors in the success of these relationships. Moreover, patriarchy plays its bedeviling role in these relationships. But mother-child relationship is free from these negative forces and that’s why it is said to be the most satisfying one. But Shashi Deshpande has exploded the myth related to motherhood in this novel. Motherhood is taken to be a natural state of fulfilment and source of dignity, respect and independence from man. But it is a myth and Shashi Deshpande seems to be of the opinion that this relationship is also fraught with nagging feeling of loneliness. Again it is Saru who gives the reader profound insight and understanding of loneliness of a woman as a mother. The bond based on affection is missing between Saru and her children. Her own experiences with her mother are so nightmarish that it continues to stalk her path of finding meaningful relationship with her children. She has a deep fear lest she should fail her children as her own mother had done. This fear pushes her to other extreme and makes her an indulgent mother trying to do everything to make them happy and comfortable. But in spite of her best efforts she feels a sort of distance between herself and her children, as if she is not able to reach out to them. Abhi has his pains and Renu has her withdrawals and silences:

Renu, what is the matter?
Nothing.
Why don’t you talk?
I don’t feel like it. (21)
It indicates that in spite of her best efforts there exists no genuine communication between daughter and the mother, which in turn intensifies Saru’s anxiety and feeling of loneliness. Saru notices a “cold, shrewd, objective observer behind those little girl’s eyes of hers. And I become nervous, unsure, uncertain of myself... She reminds me of a room, whose doors are closed. Nothing emerges, neither her joys nor her sorrows. And I sense a lack of feeling, of sensitivity in her ... One drawing of hers is for me unforgettable. Trees, tall and straight, towering almost, drawn in black crayons. Scarcely any gap between the trees. A feeling of brooding darkness. Of frightening confinement. And in the foreground a child. Smiling. Smirking rather...” (28). This painting gives her the feeling as if they are imprisoned in cages, frightened of each other and glaring at each other with love and suspicion; as if they are opaque to each other instead of strength to each other. She fears that Renu might reject her, as her mother has done. Her mind is haunted by the question whether her children would betray her as she has betrayed her mother: “Will Renu turn mocking eyes on me one day? Will Abhi defy me? Will they betray me as I betrayed her?” (139) This process of Saru’s thoughts depicts her feelings of guilt, fear and despair resulting from a complete absence of communication between her and her children. This is, indeed, a forceful expression of the feelings of mother’s alienation and loneliness.

Thus, Shashi Deshpande shows, through numerous examples of different kinds of relationships, that none of them can be a sure dike against the tides of frustration and alienation in different forms. If the marital and extra-marital relations fail to provide genuine feelings of belongingness, equally disappointing prove to be the efforts of men and women to find the comfort and succour of relatedness in relations within family and society. In the absence of love, security and warmth of human relationships, a battered self emerges which tries to find fulfilment through other means. Shashi Deshpande has shown job as an alternative to get the feelings of belongingness and satisfaction. It is normally seen that failure in relationships encourages man to achieve fulfilment through his work. A battered self that emerges out of strained relationships tries to regain its esteem through success in profession. It becomes the medium of his creativity and self-expression. Success in profession places him in a respectable position in society. But this relief provided by professional success cannot be complete and long lasting. Professional success cannot fill up the inner vacuum created by emotional discontent. This is clearly
depicted by Shashi Deshpande through the example of Saru. Failure to find rootedness in her familial relationships pushes Saru deeper into engagement in her profession.

Getting disenchanted in her relationships she starts spending more and more time in her clinic. Whenever there is a patient before her, she ‘feels real’ evincing how Saru, the doctor, with her patients, forgets Saru, the discontented daughter, wife and mother. The noises and the gestures she makes, also give the reader a feel of the thrill she experiences in her job. But it provides her only a temporary escape from consciousness of failures. It’s only during the moments when she is with the patients that she experiences the brief spells of contentment and self-realization. The feelings of frustration in relationship return with greater force in the moments when she is unto herself. During this time she has strange fear of disintegration, a terrified consciousness of not existing. She, therefore, feels that without work she “will regress, go back to being a lifeless puppet, a smirk pasted on to its face” (22). That’s why, she sees her profession as a ventriloquist and herself as a ventriloquist’s dummy who smiles and talks because of ventriloquist. But sometimes even her profession fails her. She fears that a day will come when behind the table there will be just a white coat containing nothing but emptiness. She fears that “one day there would be no ventriloquist, giving me the right lines to say, the right faces to make” (22). This is a clear expression of failure to find happiness in the realm of work by forgetting the pain of her private and personal life.

Strained relationship with parents, marital incompatibility, disillusionment in extramarital affairs, communication gap with her own children and spells of deep discontentment after a brief escape in the field of work affect her psyche so adversely that she stops feeling one with her own self. Her past haunts her and over her present she loses her control. She turns out to be a complete picture of confused, perplexed and lost-to-herself personality: “Once I found myself cutting a piece of paper, telling myself... these are bits of my mind falling on to the ground ... And the fear in me that my mind had indeed gone. That it was lying there is strips on the ground” (22). To mask her inner disintegration she keeps herself up-to-date outwardly, which confirms her alienation from her own self. She cuts her hair short. She spares no effort to look more elegant and more sophisticated. She carefully learns the ways how to dress and how to carry herself. But all this is “just a veneer. Behind this, there’s nothing” (24). By and by, her feelings of
nothingness, loneliness and hopelessness increase to such an extent that she cannot sleep quietly in the night. She has no hope of any saviour: "For her, there was not even god" (43). In utter desperation she clings to the idea of God and has gone in for pujas, fasts and rituals: "But there was no comfort in it at all. Just the feeling of being a fraud, an actress acting out a role she didn’t believe in" (43). Her body which once opened sesame of enjoyment for her was now "like a house full of unclean things, never cleaned, never opened" (29). In utter desperation she says, "I don’t know how I can bear myself" (29).

In spite of such helplessness she could not muster the required courage to talk to Manu, the real cause of her anxiety, fear and pain. Rather, she keeps mum which accentuates her guilt. In her loneliness she broods, "Would it always be a failure, any attempt to reach out to another human being? Had she been chasing a chimera all her life, hoping for someone? Perhaps the only truth is that man is born to be cold and lonely and alone" (219).

Shashi Deshpande, thus, gives us a peep into the psyche of an alienated soul resulting in total disintegration of self. Saru seems desperate to find a centre that could give coherence and hold together her otherwise fragmented life. Deshpande’s rendering of this stage of despair and horror of loneliness is not only poignant but realistic in its psychological and social textures. Like works of any other major writer, Deshpande’s novels don’t leave the reader with her characters in a blind alley. Life moves on and so do the efforts of her characters to find answers to their predicament. She, therefore, depicts her characters, particularly the protagonists, not surrendering but seeking to emerge out of their crisis as more confident individuals. Saru, for instance, is a woman who refuses to sink into endless gloom. On the contrary she decides to “get away ... this paradise of matching curtains ... This hell of savagery and submission” (28).

The pretext of leaving this hell is provided by the news of her mother’s death. On the pretext of meeting her father after her mother’s death, she leaves for her parental home. She gets a cold reception at the door, but instead of going back she fights her consciousness and chooses to go ahead. Though at one moment she regrets her coming to her father’s house, the next moment she decides to stay there.
Her stay in her father's house gives her enough time to ponder over the situation and circumstances in which she is caught. Here she can trust these two men around, who make absolutely no demand or impose no impingements on her. Free from professional life, she is at ease with herself. Now she has ample time to ponder over the incident of Dhruva's death, her mother's unreconciled death, her father's indifference and Manu's sadism. Not a single incident in this house forces her to remember either Manohar's behaviour or that of her mother. But the memory of her own life follows her like a shadow. It is only by re-living these experiences that she is able to come out of her childhood trauma. Consequently she indulges in self-introspection and ruminates over the possible way she should have reacted: "But what if I carry my own hell within me? Then there is no hope for me at all. But that too I have to know" (28). Her realization is swift and strong when she thinks, "It is not what he's done to me, but what I've done to him" (216). Saru understands that it is she, who is self-assertive and that she has been cruel to her people like her husband Manu, her brother and her mother. She accepts, "My brother died because I heedlessly turned my back on him. My mother died alone because I deserted her. My husband is a failure because I destroyed his manhood" (217). She feels that till her last breath, she will not be able to get rid of the thought that she was cruel to them: "The façade of deception had cracked so completely ... Shafts of truth pierced her, causing her unbearable pain" (212). She becomes aware of the fact that her ego and desire for power is responsible for all the problems that crept in her life. A.K. Awasthi observes, "No atonement can ever redeem her of the feeling of guilt."17

A new development takes place in the process of introspection when Saru lays bare her heart before her father after a long period of procrastination and hesitation. She wants sympathy from her father. She is still not confident of herself and pleads for help from her father. After listening her story, her father makes her realize that she should not feel guilty for her brother and mother because he had never held her responsible for Dhruva's death and her mother is dead now. As far as Manu is concerned, the problem is of her own making because she adopted escapism as a defense mechanism rather than facing the problem squarely. Saru becomes humble and her father helps her to regain her will power. From now on she feels that it's her life and there is no need to hide herself from others and be a silent sufferer. This is what she has desired till then and the absence
of which has alienated herself from her home, her family and surroundings. Finally she realizes, “All right, so I’m alone. But so’s 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’re sunk” (220). She realizes that sufferings of multitude don’t mitigate hers and if all are ‘alone’ what else is there to fear. She now feels that she has to face the situation courageously and it is she who has to decide about herself. Besides, one cannot go back in life; one has to continue on the path of one’s own choice where ever it leads to. She breaks away from the shadows of relationships of past which had haunted her. She observes, “… all those ties we cherish as eternal and long-lasting are more ephemeral than a dewdrop” (208). She realizes that ultimate reality is one’s self, one’s own self. Saru becomes aware of the fact that escapism is no solution, “a permanent solution has to come from within” (113). She realizes that one has to be sufficient within oneself because there is no other refuge elsewhere and she needs to apply to herself the advice she had once given to Dhruva: “…the dark holds no terrors. That 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” (85).

Darkness denotes fear and sorrow, dejection and estrangement. It makes one incapable of seeing things clearly and objectively. The darkness of mind ceases to be terrible the moment one is prepared to face the situation. As the knowledge dawns upon Saru that the dark is not terrible, everything seems to fall in place. She becomes aware that neither secluded life nor the “wall of silence” will be of any help to her. To Saru, there is realization that marriage is no guarantee for happiness. She is brave enough to realize that “it was important to go on just the same, not to stop, even though there was doom waiting for her” (210).

In spite of this much of awareness and knowledge when the testing time comes she recoils again. At the end of the novel she gets a letter from Manu announcing his arrival. She packs her luggage to take an escape route unsure of where to go. Escape has always been her mode of resolving tangled knots, exchanging old horrors for new ones. But her father urges her to confront reality. He advises her to face the situation: “Don’t turn your back on things again. Turn round and look at them. Meet him” (216).
After this advice when there is knock at the door she hesitantly opens the door and finds Ravi asking for her medical attention. At this moment of utter despair, it is call of her profession that steadies her and gives her the courage to confront reality. The steadied woman in Saru says, “Baba, if Manu comes, tell him to wait. I’ll be back as soon as I can” (221). These words uttered by Saru suggest that the advice of her father, who acts as a guiding force in the end, has purged her of her bitterness. She seems to accept the common human lot she is caught in. Uptil now she is guided by her instinctive self resulting in her sharp reactions to the situations. This reactionary instinct led to her estrangement. But now this instinctive self is guided by her rationality symbolized by her father’s experience and wisdom. Cleavage that was there between instinctive self and rational self is now bridging, bringing out a sort of harmony in her thoughts. Though understanding has dawned upon her yet she doesn’t seem determined about her future actions. Setting out to attend her patient is an indication of Saru’s assertion of her career. It seems that now she is in control of herself and will shed her passivity. It is expected that she would try to reinvent and reanalyze her relationship with Manu rather than bearing the discord. It seems that she is resolved to face the situations rather than turning her back upon them. She shows signs of some resolution and will to confront life with its pressures. Her honest and courageous self-examination suggests that she will not seek escape in illusions. In spite of this much knowledge enlightenment is a distant dream for her. Though she is now aware of the fact that suffering is a common human lot yet there is no indication that she has accepted the reality, and has become brave enough to face the ultimate truth of life.

The Dark Holds No Terrors is, in this way, a journey of the protagonist from a state of rejection, escape and alienation towards a realization of living life with a sense of its acceptance, affirming its value with all its realities. The novelist indicates this change in the outlook of the protagonist by placing her character in midst of those men and women who tend to remain rather static in their approach. It is noticeable that none of the other characters irrespective of their class, gender, generation and educational status etc. seems to come out of the state of discontentment, maladjustments and disconnectedness within their selves as well as in their relationships with others. This is because they appear to be either lacking in sensitivity, intellectual ability to understand the nature and
causes of their predicament or do not possess adequate inner resources so necessary for overcoming the darkness of loneliness in their life. All of them, therefore, appear to exist at a rather simpler level unable to exercise their freedom to choose the kind of life they would like to live. This pattern of contrast not only brings out the more complex and dynamic personality of the protagonist, Saru but also, at the same time, shows the novelist's ability to deal with the experience of alienation in its different forms and nuances. The way the writer depicts this theme in its various forms, establishing artistically a pattern of cause and effect, imparts to her art an element of social and psychological realism. The novel, thus, gains not only in its depth and complexity but in its wider social and human relevance as well.

This richness of her art, deriving mainly from Deshpande's interest in depicting human predicament, binds all her novels into a unified body accommodating a range of possibilities of human experiences and responses. Though, like *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *Roots And Shadows* too, has the life of a woman protagonist, Indu at its center, the novel is firmly embedded in the larger social and economic milieu giving to the theme of estrangement in human relationship, abnegation of one's chosen image of life and even the denial of one's own body and desires, wider social context. Once again, the novelist treats the experience of alienation as something not limited to only women of a particular class and status. She explores and renders the life and psyche of men as well with equal insight and dexterity. What strikes the reader strongly is the ability of Deshpande to present this human experience of being alone in its endless diversity and multiplicity in its nature and manifestation. However, all these different forms and expressions of the theme of alienation have been in a pattern of comparison and contrast with the experiences of central figure, giving to the novel a unified structure. If the treatment of this theme in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is built around Saru, it is Indu who mainly carries the burden of the theme in *Roots and Shadows*.

**ROOTS AND SHADOWS**

Thus, if *The Dark Holds No Terrors* records the journey of Saru from feared existence to the emergence of will to face the inimical forces of life, then *Roots and Shadows* deals with Indu's attempt to assert her individuality and realize her freedom.
Like Saru of *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Indu is also a professional woman who marries a man of her own choice to get rid of stifling home environment. But marriage, instead of providing emotional succour and satisfaction opens new horizons of problems for her. Unlike Saru, whose marital happiness is poisoned by her husband’s jealousy and sadistic behaviour, dissatisfaction of Indu from her married life is her own creation. Her husband does not compel her to behave in a specific fashion rather she herself moulds her manners and behaviours according to Jayant’s wishes for fear of failure of her love marriage. This fear has its roots in her childhood days spent in a joint family headed by Akka.

Childhood is a period which is not influenced by the past or the future yet it has a tremendous role in shaping character and temperament of the mature person. So, it should grow into adulthood feeding on love that is the one and only crucial need in a child’s life. Want of love and paradoxically surfeit of it, can be equally harmful. Children who do not get genuine love from parents fail to gather a sense of belongingness and develop a sense of insecurity and fear. Impact of childhood experiences on mind is clearly revealed by M. Mani Meiti’s observation: “Childhood experience is of vital importance in the study of mind’s behaviour, for all that lies embedded in the individual consciousness as latent content, appears and reappears as drives and urges in the individual’s unguarded moments.”18

Childhood experiences of Indu in a joint family and the nature of her relationships with her father and Akka during this period leave a great impact on her personality and life. It is during childhood that a child develops emotional bondings with her family members. These bondings or relationships provide warmth and feeling of relatedness to a child. While sympathy and tranquility emanate from harmonious interpersonal relations, disillusionment and despondency issue from a clash of ideas and personalities. Like Saru’s strained relationship with her parents, Indu’s relationship with her father characterized by indifference, and with Akka characterized by domination, create in her a feeling of unwantedness, disgust and rage.

Indu’s mother being dead at her birth, the whole responsibility of her upbringing comes to her father. But she is left to the cares of his large family by her father who is oblivious of his paternal duty. He does not return to see her until she is one year old.
Though she gets much love and care from her uncles and aunts, her father’s indifference toward her hurts her a lot. She realizes that she, being a girl child, failed to get father’s love and affection: “He had not even come to see me until I was more than a year old. But that, perhaps, was because I was a girl. If I had been a son…” (19). Indu is shocked to see the rigidness in her father’s attitude which makes him unconcerned about his fatherly responsibility. His detachment from his own motherless daughter angers Indu and she sarcastically remarks, “To be so detached and objective with your own daughter... it’s a rare gift” (164). He does not take any interest in her up-bringing except asserting for her education in an English medium school. But even this move of her father infuriates Indu because her English education separates her from other children of the family: “Father had never claimed me at any time. All that he had achieved was setting me apart from others” (81).

Father’s disinterestedness leaves her to the mercy of his joint family. In the absence of motherly love and paternal affection, the charge of her upbringing and socialization is taken over by her uncles and aunts. Socialization is a process by which a child, who is born with an enormously wide range of behavioural potentialities, is introduced to the norms and values of society. But if the very agency of socialization is in the grip of obsolete traditions, then socialization of the child is bound to suffer. Upper caste Brahmin family, in which Indu is brought up, is highly influenced by caste-system and patriarchy. All the members of the family blindly follow the myth of superiority of man. This is a family where birth of a boy is considered a piece of luck. When Sunanda Atya had a boy as her first child they all called her a lucky girl. This is a family where women have internalized their secondary status as their ordained lot.

In this family atmosphere, prejudiced against the girl child, the socialization of Indu starts on gender lines. She is reminded time and again that she, being a female child, should learn the mannerism suited to a girl. She is advised to inculcate feminine virtues of obedience, silence, submission and surrender which she questions vehemently: “As a child, they had told me I must be obedient and unquestioning. As a girl, they had told me I must be meek and submissive. Why ? I had asked. Because you are a female. You must accept everything, even defeat, with grace because you are a girl…” (158). The wide gap between the demands which her prejudiced family members make on her and what she
actually wants, makes Indu a divided self, disrupting the process of her integration with society. This type of orthodoxical thinking, which paves way for gender based socialization, makes Simone De Beauvoir comment, “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.”

Not only this gender based socialization but the way in which she is made aware of her womanhood fills Indu with disgust for her physicality. The knowledge of feminine functions of her body is thrust on her so brutally that she starts resenting her womanhood: “My womanhood ... I had never thought of it until the knowledge had been thrust brutally, gracelessly on me the day I had grown up. ‘You’re a woman now,’ Kaki had told me. ‘You can have babies yourself ” (79). Her growing up becomes even more burdensome, breeding self-disgust, when she comes to know that for four days she could not touch anyone or anything. Thus, her introduction to the beautiful world of womanhood breeds disharmony with her own body. Not only the manner but the restrictions imposed on her on attaining puberty fill her with immense rage: “I had raged against the rules which had made me an outcaste three days in a month” (119). The psychological state of a girl during this period is well explained by Simone de Beauvoir when she says that for an adolescent girl “her first menstruation reveals this meaning, and her feelings of shame appear. If they were already present, they are strengthened and exaggerated this time on.”

This consciousness of shame borne out of physical change, and the flood of new urges unsettle the growing girl who needs loving assurance of a mother. But Indu, a motherless child, has nobody by her side to assure her during this period of emotional and physical upheaval. In the absence of sympathetic hand of mother “it had been a total blank. A blankness that had left its mark” (48) on her. Psychologists point out that mothers do not merely gratify the requirement of children but more importantly they give emotional support to them. Failure to get loving assurance of mother during this tumultuous period creates in Indu, like Saru, hatred for her own body and its feminine functions. This hatred creates a split between Indu, the individual and Indu, the woman. That’s why Indu, the individual, does not feel at ease with her womanly body in
particular and womanhood in general. She develops an aversion for everything that is purely feminine. She hates the utter femininity of girl’s hostel where she stays. She hates those narrations of incidents about the tactlessness of her friends and relatives about the traumatic pubertal transitions. She is repelled by natural biological functions of female as mother and develops apathy towards child birth. She is filled with an obscure sense of guilt and feels that her womanhood closes so many doors for her: “Yes, it was true. I felt hedged in, limited by my sex. I resented my womanhood because it closed so many doors to me” (79).

This resentment against womanhood and its concomitant requirement of submission becomes even more intense when she is asked to follow the rules dictated by Akka. Akka, the domineering matriarch, heads the family and carries forward the legacy of patriarchy by setting special code of conduct for the girls of the family. Though herself a victim of the system like Saru’s mother, she has no qualms of conscience in being the perpetrator of this tradition. Tara Ali Beg’s observation seems apt in this context: “Arch traditionalists that women are, it is they who have successfully and brutally established man’s ascendancy over women in society.”

Arch traditionalist Akka’s riches and elderly status give her authority that separates her from and desensitizes her to other young women in the family. This insensitivity and authoritarian attitude on Akka’s part makes Indu revolt against her. She not only resents the unconditional submission of the women of the family to Akka but also laughs at their advice that there had to be “if not the substance, at least the shadow of submission” (158) and swears not to pretend to be what she is not. The worlds of domineering Akka and rebellious Indu clash on the matters of education, love and marriage. Conflict rises to its zenith when efforts are made by Akka to bring carefree and bold Indu under her strict prescriptive regime. She is told in no unclear terms that her liberal attitude towards the boys of her college is against the family tradition and won’t be tolerated. This dictatorship on Akka’s part is vehemently contested by Indu’s ‘I won’t’. But when the long dead, never-seen mother is blamed for her behaviour, the rift becomes complete. The accusation that her mother had trapped Govind, her father, tarnishes the sanctity she has attached to the relationship. “Akka’s words had been a profanation and desecration” that instigate her to leave the home the same day with a
determination never to return. It is this antipathy towards Akka and what she represents, like Saru's against her mother that lands her up in her marriage to Jayant, a man of her own choice. Like Saru, Indu too resorts to marriage as an escape from matriarchal domination and suffocating home environment which has made her emotionally insecure. Her emotional deprivation finds solace in Jayant.

A woman enters the marital bond with the romantic idea of love, emotional security, equality, companionship and understanding. But the romance gets shattered when she finds that marriage holds quite different meanings for a man and a woman. Though the two sexes are necessary to each other, this necessity does not often guarantee reciprocity between them. Marriage establishes the authority of man legally, and woman has no choice but to submit to his wishes. That’s why, Shashi Deshpande questions the belief that marriages take place in heaven when she presents marriages on earth with nothing heavenly around them. Here, marriage is only a trap to lure woman into a life of denial and suffocation in the service of man. For woman, in male oriented societies, marriage is both physically and mentally dissatisfying. She vacillates between thoughts of submission and rejection; and finds marriage to be degenerative with no involvement except in sex. As a result, marriage becomes meaningless and sex alone seems to sustain man-woman relationship. But the lack of communion makes even sex meaningless and there is nothing else to sustain marriage. This lack of sexual involvement and the resultant emptiness is clearly seen even in the marital life of educated and modern Indu who marries Jayant out of her own choice.

Like Saru, Indu also leaves parental home to get rid of maternal domination. To get the much required emotional security, which her mother surrogate failed to provide, she marries Jayant, a person of other caste than hers. Her marriage is the result of love at first sight in which she proposes him against the general tradition. Proposing for marriage is again an effort to fight against her womanhood. Her marriage with Jayant is an effort to assert her independent identity and, at the same time, to hurt Akka’s conventional thinking. Thus, Saru’s and Indu’s untraditional marriages are counteractive strategies to register their protest and assert their free will against the despised oppressive mother figure. Her marriage has the intended effect on Akka and she reacts sharply to Indu’s intercaste marriage like Saru’s mother and declares, “Such marriages never work.
Different castes, different languages ... it's all right for a while. Then they realize...” (68). Realization in Indus’s case dawns upon her very soon. In the beginning, everything seems to be going on the right track. Void in her life seems to be filled by Jayant’s presence: “Then I met Jayant. And lost the ability to be alone” (31). Like Saru, Indu’s initiation into physical relationship with Jayant fills her with immense pleasure and her body “burgeoned into a flower of exquisite felicity” (83). The fulfilment she got through this union seemed to be removing her aching emptiness which once shamed her. But “there was, even then, a small crack in the perfection” (83). This small crack in the bond that erupts with her passionate response to sex changes their life, which is based on hypocrisy. Jayant’s traditional belief that woman should be passive and not demonstrative of her love and emotions, surprises Indu. Her response to his love is unacceptable to him: “... it shocks him to find passion in a woman. It puts him off. When I’m like that, he turns away from me” (83). In such a situation, according to Linda Phelps, women are “alienated because we are separated from our own experience by the prevailing male cultural definition of sex – the male fantasy of active man and passive woman.”

Thus, Jayant’s views are coloured by this age-old cultural definition of sex, which has defined woman as a means to fulfil man’s needs and not as a human being with her own sexual needs. Whereas Indu, a woman, who disregards such traditions and is passionately in love with her husband, is hurt to find her love rejected and suppressed by him. She is forced to pretend, to be passive, unresponsive and still on her nuptial bed. Sex loses all its rejuvenating power when it becomes a one sided affair. Ujwala Patil holds Jayant responsible for Indu’s pain and frustration, borne out of sexual dissatisfaction: “By refusing to accept Indu’s real self, her human self, Jayant forces in her a state of armed neutrality to life with him and mars the felicity of their relationship.” Resultantly, she becomes an anachronism, a woman who loves her husband too passionately and is forced to be ashamed of it. Juxtaposed to Indu is Saru, who develops an aversion to the sexual act because of marital rape. While Saru silently bears the physical tortures and humiliation, Indu silently crushes her passion and desires to please Jayant. When a woman is expected to negate herself and to behave in accordance with the male construct of woman, she finally fails to recognize herself. Marriage transforms Indu, as Naren observes, from the sharp-tongued to the soft toned, which is a clear indication of
suppression and self-effacement she has gone through during this period. Marriage has taught her an immense capacity for deception too, for she learns to reveal to Jayant nothing but what he wants to see and hear: “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” (38). Her genuine responses and emotions remain suppressed as if an expression of them would profane their relationship. Emotional restriction reduces her to an automaton responding in the way it is conditioned to do so. This persistent denial of the right to express her feeling “compels a duality of life”25 in Indu. Judging herself always from Jayant’s point of view, she belittles her claim of becoming an independent, assertive adult. Her likes are conditioned by his wants: “Always what he wants, what he would like. What would please him” (49). When she looks in the mirror she looks through the eyes of her husband, she dresses and undresses only to please him. She has become a fluid with no shape and form of its own. In becoming an ideal wife she has castrated her real self. She loses the ‘I’ in her husband for she realizes that without wants “there is no ‘I’” (49). As Purdah becomes a part of the suppressed personality of a Muslim woman, passivity becomes part of her consciousness.

Besides sexual incompatibility, difference in their attitudes causes rift in their relationship. Jayant believes in traditional view of marriage where submission of woman to her husband is taken for granted. On the other hand, Indu expects complete physical, spiritual and emotional union in marriage. They seem to be on different wavelengths as far as their expectations from marriage are concerned: “... we’re on different levels. You know the stage setting they have for some plays nowadays? It’s like that. We’re on different planes. He chooses his level. And I ... I try to choose the one he would like me to be on. It humiliates me” (82). Thus, to please Jayant she denies herself the right of choice and goes by Jayant’s choice and not her own. This suppression of expression of self humiliates her. Besides humiliating, her marriage disintegrates her, for she is forced to relinquish her identity before his masculinity. The realization of the need to conform for survival and the awareness that conformity is the great destroyer of selfhood, makes her cry out, “I can never become myself”(34). The cost of her marriage is her individuality. That’s why, Indu finds not much difference between a wedding and a funeral: “A wedding, a funeral ... there is very little difference between them” (30).
Wedding implies the death of the woman, as she has to kill all her individuality and independence and accept the yoke of dependence.

Not only the attitudinal disparity but the diametrically opposite temperaments also hinder perfect understanding between Indu and Jayant. As S.P. Swain observes, “One is a writer in quest of an artistic selfhood while other is a philistine in pursuit of materialistic happiness.” Indu’s decision to resign job, when it imposes demands on her individuality is thwarted by Jayant for economic reasons. Self-alienation accelerates as the conflicting demands of her feminine desire to conform to the cultural ideal of feminine passivity clashes with her ambition to be a creative artist. More than her humiliation of succumbing to the demands of the editor, its Jayant’s failure to understand and support that hurts her.

One more reason why Jayant fails to understand her true nature and expectations is lack of effective communication between them. His knowledge about her is limited only to those areas that are open to him. Fear of rejection prevents Indu to reveal her troubled inner world to him. As in the case of other marriages, silence becomes an integral element of their life too. Indu ruefully remarks: “That was one thing I had learnt now. One thing my marriage had taught me. The gift of silence” (33). Instead of communicating her fears and anxieties to Jayant, Indu, like Saru, also adopts silence as a means to avoid the conflict. The determination to avoid conflict results from her earnestness to disprove indomitable Akka, who like Saru’s mother, prophesied catastrophe for an inter-caste marriage. Hence, she moulds herself to please Jayant, for retaliation will certify her marriage as failure: “And so I went on lying, even to myself compromising, shedding bits of myself along the way. Which meant that I, who had despised Devdas for being a coward, was the same thing myself. I had killed myself as surely as he had done” (159).

If marriage compels even bold and rebellious Indu to lie to herself then it poisons the life of submissive Minni from very childhood to adulthood. Instead of becoming a source of harmony and sense of unity within self, marriage for both of them proves to be a potent means of dissonance and discontentment. The causes and forms of this discontentment may vary due to difference in their circumstances and intellectual levels.
Indu marries out of her own choice, but for Minni, marriage is something she has to enter whether she likes it or not. That’s why, this forced relationship never even holds out hopes of self-discovery for her.

Minni belongs to that class of girls who are brought up with a single purpose of getting married. That’s why, she has to inculcate in herself all the traditional feminine qualities since her childhood. Devoid of any other aim in her life, she devotes herself to the service of her family members. Minni’s obedience, silence and submission never allow her to go beyond the rules and regulations set by the family for girls. Brought up under strict supervision, guidance and restrictions, she becomes acquainted with the real duties of a girl at a very early age: “Minni had always been very much of a girl was expected to be, helping the women with small odd chores from a very young age, waiting on her father and brothers and being generally docile” (122).

Girls, like Minni, who are always in the fetishes of traditions and household work, have no other option but to remain satisfied with the things provided. They are also conditioned to merge their aspirations and desires with those of their family. Minni, too, absorbs the trend established by the elderly women of her family. She has been prepared for looking after the house and Akka’s desire to educate her was not because of giving her an independent stand but because she feels that educated girls get a good match. Minni accepts: “I’m no good at studies. I never was. I went to school because ... I had to. And then to college because Akka said I must go. Boys prefer graduates these days, she said. So I went. But I failed and it was a relief to give it up. There’s only one thing I’m really good at ... looking after a house. And to get a home, I have to get married. This is not my home, is it?” (125) Regarding this feeling of homelessness of Minni, Vrinda Nabar’s comment is noteworthy: “Moreover, even if we concede, that the girl is an alien in her father’s home, it is man-made laws and social strictures that make her so. Right from birth, a girl is made to feel like a bird of passage in her father’s home.” Minni’s psyche, too, is fed with this idea. Her parents’ growing concern to settle her marriage fills her with guilt – guilt for being a girl, guilt for remaining unmarried, guilt for being a burden on her family. Guilt is accompanied by humiliation when people rejected her on the pretext of her physical appearance or the manner of her dressing. After being interviewed and rejected several times, she loses all her buoyancy and enthusiasm.
towards marriage, and her only wish is to get married at the earliest in order to save her parents from further difficulties: "Any man, Indu? Yes, any man. Any man who says "yes". You don't know what it has been like. Watching Kaka and Hemant and even Madhav-kaka running around after eligible men" (126). For this reason she agrees to marry the illiterate 'fool' chosen by her parents. She expresses her helplessness behind her resolute silence and her inability to refuse the match:

What choice do I have, Indu? She asked me, resuming her snipping ...

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, this fact that I can choose, that differentiates me from the animals. But years of blindfolding can obscure your vision so that you can no more see the choices. Years of shackling can hamper your movement so that you can no more move out of your cage of no choices. (125)

Years of shackling by gender based socialization makes Minni turn down Indu's proposal of marrying Naren. She refuses to romanticize her marriage, which for her, is an arrangement arrived at for her welfare by the elders whose wisdom must be accepted. This attitude of Minni towards marriage compels Indu to draw a bleak picture of the institution: "Behind the facade of romanticism, sentiment and tradition, what was marriage after all, but two people brought together after cold-blooded bargaining to meet, mate and reproduce so that the generations might continue" (3).

Suffering, split and discord in marriage is not necessarily an outcome of modernity and the liberation of women. Rather, the very institution is fraught with flaws due to which older women also suffered as much as the modern ones, though the degree and kind of suffering differed a lot. Through the example of Akka, Shashi Deshpande reveals what adverse effects a child-marriage has on the psyche and general life of a girl. The story within story, narrated by Narmada Atya, lays bare the wounded psyche of Akka, which has altered her from an innocent, submissive female to a ruthless and dominant figure. What the nuptial bed does to her remains unknown except the fact that twice she runs away to her maiden home. When brought back to her husband's house, in spite of whipping and starvation, she prefers to be locked up rather than joining her
husband. Her heart-piercing cry - “lock me up again, lock me up” (70) - reveals her intense desire to escape from mental and physical trauma she is forced to undergo. Marriage for her becomes a punishment.

Child marriage stifles Akka’s childhood. Her tender soul withers under the sexual advances of her mate. The frightened child is forced to surrender to the sexual drives of her husband that were no better than animal mating. Her inability to bear a child further belittles her status and she is forced to witness his liaisons silently. The Indian society does not condemn a man who seeks pleasure in other women. As Neena Arora remarks, “Man considers it as normal behaviour to satisfy his desire at both the emotional and physical levels outside marriage.”28 This reduces woman to a mere object foreclosing the very possibility of a genuine communion and fulfilment in marital relationship.

Like many other similar women, Akka too, endures and submits to insults and humiliation with a deadly stoic patience. This stoic patience and silent suffering hardens her heart. Her weak, dependent and ineffectual identity transforms into power and authority (another form of alienation) after the death of her mother-in-law and the paralytic stroke of her husband. When he pleads for a meeting with his mistress, she tells him clearly: “Listen to me. It’s my turn now. I’ve listened to you long enough. She came here. Twice. She wanted to see you. She cried and begged to be allowed to see you just for a short while. I threw her out. You’ll never see her again” (71). In control of her life and situation for the first time, Akka asserts herself and refuses to be humiliated again. But her mournful tears at night tell the tale of a loveless and mortifying marriage. Her experience in marriage is an example of the condition of girls who are trapped in marriage even before they realize the need for it. The Hindu tradition, which has always adulated husband-worshiping, self-effacement and subordination in a wife, leaves girls like Akka with no choice but to endure in silence. Y.S. Sunita Reddy opines: “Sex as a punishment was perhaps... how it was viewed by such child brides who nevertheless did not raise any banner of revolt but on the other hand continued to suffer and helped to perpetuate such oppression.”29 However, in Akka’s context, this statement does not hold good as a close reading shows that Akka, a girl of thirteen, tried twice to escape but was caught. Besides, one should not forget that revolt against marriage was not acceptable
and woman who chose to do so was often treated as outcaste. Thus, girls like Akka had no choice but to endure.

If Akka had to endure due to early marriage with an aged and debauch husband then his (husband’s) very absence due to early death plays havoc with Atya’s life. In a traditional Hindu family where husband is the mainstay for a woman, his death is the worst catastrophe that can befall her. Husband is the ultimate source of status, recognition, socialization and her very identity. A woman’s main aim after marriage is to serve him, please him and to pray for his long life. Unfortunately, if her prayers are not answered, her life is ruined forever. If a living husband brings good luck of being Suhagan then dead husband brings the stigma of widowhood for the wife: “Widowhood marks a transition from a marital to a widowed status which is far from being smooth, for it means not only a loss of status but also a loss of pride, privilege, prestige, security and independence within the family.”30 It further deepens the chasm within and with the rest of the world. Here, sufferings do not end with such a huge loss, rather they start for her. She is forced to lead a life of self-denial and self-abnegation, strictly according to the rules set for her by society. She is treated like a pariah and her presence in social functions is prohibited. She becomes a burden for her in-laws as well as for her parents.

The plight of widows can be gauged through the example of Atya in Roots and Shadows. Her miserable lot compels the reader to sympathize with her, who became widow at an early age. Her in-laws, true to tradition, ill-treated her after her husband’s death. Then, she is brought to her parental home where she works from early morning till late night without any complaint or demand. In spite of all the household work, she is ever ready to help the children as well as elders of the family. Her immense love towards the children of the family makes Indu ask her, “Atya, don’t you wish sometimes you had your own children?”(39). This unexpected question removes her mask of endurance and reveals her disappointment and hopelessness: “Put a person in a room of this size... and for some time he’ll scream and shout and rage and bang his head against the wall. Then he gets used to it” (39). Atya also gets used to her fate of silent suffering. Though she never expresses her despair and suffering explicitly, but now and then, it gets expressed through severe headaches. The headaches during which she remains confined to the dark room are a clear indication of her grief and utter loneliness.
Through the example of Indu, Minni, Akka and Atya, Shashi Deshpande shows that marriage is the most powerful means that our society uses to ensure female subjugation. She depicts marriage not as the fulfilment of the woman but as something debilitating, restricting and emotionally fragmenting. Marriage is the turning point in the life of a woman and the view of the writer seems to be that marriage instead of brightening up a woman’s life stifles her growth and becomes a potent means of her alienation. Love seems to have no place in her marital life and this leads her to see only deceit and betrayal around. She becomes a mute spectator of how sex becomes a power symbol, a symbol of authority and marriage, just another kind of bondage.

Besides marriage, motherhood is the other source from where a married woman can draw happiness and emotional satisfaction. According to Simone de Beauvoir, “It is through maternity that a woman fulfils her physiological destiny. If she is not a complete individual as wife, she becomes such as a mother and the child is her happiness and her justification.” That’s why, feminine sexuality acquires justification and merit because of its inevitable link with procreation. Socially, motherhood grants a woman a new status and occupation in society. Swami Vivekanand sums up this attitude of society towards woman when he says: “The ideal womanhood in India is motherhood – that marvellous, unselfish, all suffering, ever forgiving mother. The wife walks behind the shadow.”

Both Saru and Indu hardly achieve this image of ideal motherhood as their own experiences with their mothers are far from good. Absence or the too-dominating presence of a mother or mother figure repels them from the idea of motherhood. Their rejection of motherhood can also be linked to their initiation into puberty and menstruation. Indu had been told that now she could have babies and she associates the unclean menstruation with childbirth. Indu’s none-too-sure a relationship with Jayant prompts her to opt out of motherhood. When Jayant, on whom she had pinned all her hopes of happiness, fails her, she loses the courage to try the other alternative i.e. motherhood for fear of same disillusionment. “A child, you till yourself, is the ultimate answer, the only meaning. God! I wouldn’t dare to take the risk of finding myself wrong after all” (38). Thus, this fear of failure which has already poisoned her marital life closes another door to her for happiness and realization of self.
Modern educated woman like Indu, do not bank upon marriage and motherhood only for fulfilment and happiness. Her western education has enabled her to look out for other avenues of fulfilment i.e. employment outside home where she can use her individual talent beyond the limitations of roles ascribed by society. Indu uses her talent of writing and makes her career in journalism. Being a true journalist at heart, she wants to present true picture of society through her writings. But when her attempt to expose the reality of ruthless and unscrupulous social worker is thwarted by the editor, Indu becomes deflated. To add insult to injury, she is forced to rewrite the story heaping praises on the glamorous, seemingly sincere and dedicated social worker which “was a kind of flagellation” (17). She is forced to meet the demands of the market, suppressing her will to bring reality to light. Consequently, she feels alienated from the very job which could have proved a source of mental satisfaction and fulfilment. Dissatisfied with the work she is forced to do, Indu, like Saru decides to … resign her job. But to her utter despair, Jayant in spite of empathizing with her, asks her not to fight against the system and continue with the job for they need the money and “have a long way to go” (17). Indu is unable to understand where they are to go. But she does not feel like questioning Jayant and is forced to continue the very job she feels alienated from: “I had quietly gone back to work. Hating it, hating myself. Waking up each day and thinking … I can’t go on” (18).

Thus for Indu, unlike Saru, who feels real whenever there is a patient before her, journalistic profession ceases to be vocation and it degenerates into a mere monetary source.

Disenchantment with her profession and her relationship with Jayant prove too much for Indu. She feels quite helpless, with no hope of assurance from any corner. Marriage and job, the main sources of happiness and security, fail to work in her life. She tries both of them and gets disillusionment in return. Even her intelligence and reasoning are unable to save her from confusion and anxiety. She is at complete loss and can not decide whom to ask for help and where to go: “Feeling trapped, seeing myself endlessly chained to the long dusty road that lay ahead of me” (18). At this very time, she is summoned by Akka. This unexpected call proves “a welcome reprieve, a chance to get away” from “what was happening to me ... to Jayant and me ... and our life together” (18).
It is only after coming back that she realizes what the family had meant to her. Everyday of the ten years she had been away from the family, she had dreamt, though only for a few minutes, that she was back home with the family. After coming back she easily slides back into the old ways and feels very comfortable in her parental home. Thus, Indu, like Saru, free from tensions of marital and professional life, gets an opportunity to reconsider her relationship in her parental home. But unlike Saru, who is left to herself by Madhav and her father who make no demands on her, responsibility of a large family is thrust on Indu’s shoulders by Akka. She had chosen Indu as her heiress and left to her money and jewels. This move on Akka’s part angers Indu, and like Saru, she wishes that she might not have come back to her parental house.

Indu comes back to her parental family to get some relief from her tumultuous life. But to her utter despair, new turmoils are waiting for her. Her main source of anxiety is Akka’s will through which she is made the sole heiress of Akka’s property and jewels surpassing all her cousins. Through this move of Akka’s, Deshpande reveals how the property becomes the major source of jealousies, betrayals, treacheries, hostilities and alienation in a joint family like that of Indu’s, where everybody has an eye on Akka’s property. If Kaka wants from Indu to pay for Minni’s wedding and to maintain the house, Sharad wants money to become doctor and Madhav-Sumitra want money for the business of Sunil. Sunil’s jealousy against Indu comes to the fore when he questions Indu’s right on Akka’s property and says, “She has no right at all, if you ask me. She isn’t part of the family now...” (93). Sumant, Hemant and Sharad’s hostility towards successful Indu is perceptible in their curt remarks through which they present themselves as menial beings in comparison to Indu. Not only in relation to Indu but also in relations of other members of the family, money plays an important role. Kaki’s bitterness against other family members is borne out by the fact that they have to bear the burden of fulfilling all the responsibilities, while others like Madhav-Sumitra, Indu’s father and Vinayak-Kamala shy away from their duties towards family matters, on one pretext or the other. Vinayak and Kamla bear rancour against Kaka-Kaki because Akka had agreed to pay for Minni’s marriage while they were not able to get any monetary support from her even if they have three daughters to marry off. Sumitra is fretful because Akka denied them any sort of help for their daughter Lata’s marriage.
Almost all of these characters have been presented by Deshpande as lacking in real jest and spirit of life, dragging on with the monotonous burden of their existence. Deshpande, through them, exposes how economic dependence destroys the very sense of self, pushing the characters into a state of nullity as humans. Another clear example of the deadening effects of economic dependence upon one's psyche, in the novel, appears in the form of old uncle. He appears in the novel as a wise and experienced old man who emphasizes the importance of interdependence and attachment in familial relationships to Indu. He, therefore, appears to command some respect from the reader for his words of wisdom and sympathy and for the way he introspects and honestly acknowledges his own responsibility for the predicament of his own and that of Naren as well.

It is revealed that he had to resign from his job as a teacher because of bad health which plunges him into a state of economic deprivation and dependence. It turns him from a "cheerful spry" (57) man into a defeated person, waiting only for death. The way he is often heard mumbling unto himself, that it is time for him to go, only shows his withdrawal into himself, a sure sign of his alienation from all around him.

Deshpande has very suggestively brought out, through him, the agony of a man tormented by his own feelings of guilt that he has failed his own daughter and her son because of his cowardice. Loss of job and the concomitant economic dependence creates in him feelings of being a non-entity. He admits that it was because of his lack of economic self-reliance and the failure of confidence in himself that he did not leave the place even when Naren, the only son of his own daughter, insisted vehemently and repeatedly for it. It results not only in his insularity of connection to the outer world but also in the breakdown of understanding and communication with Naren. The guilt and turmoil it creates, within his own psyche, often evident in the form of self accusations, is an index of his alienation from his own self.

Deshpande shows that the economic factor is of crucial significance in determining one's attitude towards self and others. If the economically weak, irrespective of gender and age, are condemned to feelings of loneliness then economically empowered also have to face estrangement in relationships from all of them whose expectations they fail to satisfy. That's why, so many expectations of different members of the family become the cause of alienation between them and Indu. Their varied and
endless expectations from Indu throw her into a nagging dilemma. It becomes difficult for her to take some concrete decision. She does not know whether she should sell the house, the house where a motherless baby of fifteen days had been brought and where she spent eighteen years of her life or she should buy the house and make Kaka and Atya happy. Thus, the new dilemmas and tensions take the place of the old ones.

As she is considering all these possibilities and many more, she has time to reconsider her relationship with her husband and find out what was wrong with it. She realizes that in loving Jayant and pleasing him she had become the self-denying and self-effacing traditional wife she always detested. Her realization of the problem in her marriage makes her confide in her cousin, Naren. Their growing intimacy draws them to each other. Indu’s discontent resulting from the rigours of male misconception of female sexuality and the desperate need to assert herself, urges her to dare into extramarital relationship with Naren that lasts for two nights. Despite her claim of monogamy, she consciously succumbs to carnality (surrenders herself to passions). She indulges in the act with much wild abundance and cherishes it later without any guilt consciousness: “I can go back and lie on my bed. I thought, and it will be like erasing the intervening period and what had happened between Naren and me. But deliberately I went to my bed and began folding the covers. I don’t need to erase anything I have done, I told myself in a fit of bravado” (168). This assertion of her sexual self has sparked off contradictory remarks from the reviewers. P. Bhatnagar laments: “Indu’s causal and matter-of-fact attitude to what she had done is shocking. Have our morals really gone so low that women commit this sin for nothing. Just to prove that they do not lack courage. Is this really representative of the modern Indian woman?”33 Attacking such allegations, Y.S. Sunita Reddy remarks, “Perhaps this is Deshpande’s answer to the double standards practised by our society where only men are allowed to take sexual liberties.”34

Moreover, Indu’s relationship with Naren, also represents the assertion of her sexuality that was so rudely ignored and crushed by her husband. That’s why, P. Ramamoorthy does not view Indu’s adultery as something negative, but as something stemming from the predicament of the compulsive circumstance woman like Indu find themselves in. He observes: “This sheds a brilliant light on Indu’s awareness of her autonomy and her realization that she is a being and not a dependent on Jayant.”35
Through Indu’s joyous release of passion in the company of Naren, Deshpande seeks a justification of man and woman relationship in the context of psycho-biological needs. In the company of Naren, it was not a matter of submission but of realization. Shashi Deshpande shows that forced sexual relations (as in the case of Saru) ruin the identity of woman and leave her soul anguished, tortured and humiliated but at the same time sex as an expression of super sensibility (as in the case of Indu, with Naren), has a power to sublimate human energy.

Indu’s relationship with Naren acts as stimulus to bring her out of the realm of passivity. It acts as a curtain-raiser for her which removes her confusions one by one, starting the process of enlightenment. Through his sexual union with Indu, Naren makes Indu accept the woman in her, which, hitherto, she was unwilling to do. This move of Naren paves the way for her happy conjugal life with Jayant. With Naren, Indu experiences a sense of freedom and very openly talks about herself and her failures. In the process, Naren deliberately provokes Indu into an awareness of her hypocrisy as a writer. Excoriating her for fighting against her womanhood in her creative output, Naren urges her to establish her individual identity as a writer.

A close reading of the text reveals that relationship with Naren brings “a sudden relief in her” for suddenly she comes to know what is wrong with her marriage. She comes to know that suppression of her feelings has created uneasiness in their marital life. She realizes that she herself is responsible for her present predicament because she submitted to Jayant out of her own will. Jayant never forced her to behave in a specific manner. By not displaying her wishes and desires, she has tried to avoid the conflict and prove to her family that her revolt against traditions actually brought her happiness. Lack of courage and fear of failure make her behave against her own grains. She fails to display the same boldness in handling her marital relationship as she has shown in deciding for marriage against her family. Her desire for love and care which only Jayant could fulfil also makes her coward, which further restricts her way to independent existence. Naren’s love for music and his ability to lose himself in it makes Indu realize that there is nothing shameful in her need for Jayant. She is reminded of old uncle’s saying: “Attachment ... we can’t escape it. It’s the law of life. You can never protect yourself against love” (108). She learns to accept her feelings of love towards Jayant.
without embarrassment. She understands that by losing herself in him she will be able to create harmony in their lives. Her awareness, that the love is the uniting bond, which will create this harmony, makes her give up the feelings of disgrace and pretence.

Her doubts, not only about her marital life but also related to Akka’s will and other family members, start getting removed. Her vision becomes clear and she comes to know what she must do regarding her commitments. Till now, she has looked upon Akka only as an inconsiderate and interfering old woman. But after listening to the woeful story of Akka, all her prejudices against Akka are vanished. Now she realizes that Akka had been a pillar of strength who had kept the family together through her boldness and courage. She comes to know that she is chosen as heiress by Akka because she believed her to be capable of showing the same indomitable courage and strength. She now feels that she must fulfil her obligations and responsibilities towards her family which she has been postponing till now because of lack of courage: “Here, in this house, in this family was a role waiting for me. A role that I could perhaps, act out more successfully than the one I had tried until now. For, had I not, so very often, felt myself just a mouthing, grimacing puppet, dully saying the lines I had to, feeling, actually, nothing? Had I not felt myself flat, one-dimensional, just a blurred figure merging into the background? Whereas here, I would stand out, sharp and clear” (143).

Indu, full of this renewed courage and confidence, feels that any freedom she desires, she must seek within the bounds of her obligations and responsibilities. She realizes that freedom and fulfilment can be achieved through the right perception of life, through some rules of life, which add dignity and grace to it. And that one can always find freedom within these rules. Her dilemma, regarding the fate of old house, also gets removed. She considers old house a sort of trap from which she must come out. She makes herself realize that old house has already lived its entire life. She must sell it even if she has to sell it to Shankarappa who wants to demolish it and have a big hotel built on the site. It is a very painful decision to take because it has housed four generations of a family. She is overcome by a sense of desolation and bereavement. But she reminds herself that she must not allow soft feelings to come in the way of doing what she considers a right thing to do: “And to do that, I have to be hard. If I’m soft, I’ll just cave in” (159). Determined Indu becomes aware of the fact that change is the way of life. New
order replaces the old. Nothing is permanent. So old things must be done away with so that new ones can take their place: “If not this stump, there is another. If not this tree, there will be others. Other trees will grow, other flowers will bloom, other fragrances will pervade other airs” (184).

Shankarappa is kind enough to wait until Minni’s wedding which Indu settles with other better match than chosen by her father. She attends the marriage also and feels a happy sense of participation despite the earlier animosities and conflicts. Moreover, she decides that she cannot enrich herself, despite what Jayant has written, with Akka’s money and jewels. She makes a trust of it and breaks the promise she has given to Naren before his death. Naren had believed that Akka’s money would taint any one, so he made Indu promise that she would not use that money to help Vithal, the boy servant. She breaks her promise to Naren, for Vithal is the first one to benefit from Akka’s trust. She knows that she must rise above Naren’s childish resentment because it is the living who need our loyalty not the dead. Through Akka’s trust she helps the old and deserving by being discriminate and judicious. She herself is surprised at this change in her thinking: “…how the darkness inside me was banished, replaced instead, by a gentle, kindly dawn” (179).

In her personal life also, she decides not to take the coward’s way. She wants to go back to Jayant, for she loves and needs him and wants to restart her life built on the foundation of honesty. This makes her revolt against the traditions, which force a woman to suppress her desires and sexuality. Now onwards, she is not going to suppress her feelings only to please Jayant. She also decides not to share her affair with dead Naren as she thinks that it has nothing to do with Jayant. She also decides to resign her job and devote herself to the kind of writing she has always dreamt of. With these decisions in mind she returns “home, equipped with that quality of courage, necessary to face challenge of identity crisis her marriage had posed – returns to suffer, to question, to find roots.”

Though Indu appears to be more bold and determined in the end than Saru but whether she would be able to muster the courage required to turn her decisions into actions is yet to be seen. If at one moment she decides to go back and see if that home could stand the scorching touch of honesty, the very next moment she decides to not to
tell Jayant about Naren and herself. These contradictory remarks show that she still lacks the faith in her husband which is the primary prerequisite of harmonious marital relationship. It seems from this decision of hers that she is going to start her marital life based on lies and deceptions. Her anxiety about the reaction of Jayant regarding her decision of leaving her job and not to use Akka's money also reveals that she is still in a staggering state and, for her, Jayant's reaction is of utmost importance. But her words, “even so...,” make her successor of Saru, for she, unlike Saru, believes in trying whatever might be the outcome. Unlike Saru, who has not yet made up her mind regarding going back with Manu, she even decides not to take “the cowards way again” (186).

This growth in the life of Indu towards the affirmation of her will and freedom to choose the course of her life, has been presented by Deshpande through a pattern of comparison and contrast with the attitudes of submission, conformity or escape represented by other characters in the novel. Minni's submission to her helplessness, Atya's complete resignation to her fate as a widow and the alienation of Kaka's and old uncle's from themselves and others because of their economic dependence and lack of personal vision enable the reader to appreciate Indu's growth from a more comprehensive perspective. They not only reveal variations in the form of discontentment, maladjustment and other types of alienation dealt in the novel, but also offer a contrast to Indu accenting thereby those features of her personality which distinguished her from all others.

This is strikingly evident from the treatment of the experiences of loneliness, maladjustment and inner vacuum which characterize the life of Naren in the novel. He has been portrayed as a young man who shares certain common experiences and situations with Indu. Both of them have grown up in the absence of loving care of parents. Mothers of both of them were victims of stifling social attitudes; they evince sharp sensitivity towards their parents and can hear nothing against them. Naren and Indu grow as rebels, struggling to live an authentic life of their own volition. It is interesting to note that Naren as well as Indu try to compromise with their predicament for some time. If Naren has to pull on with old uncle in his house where he does not belong, Indu tries to cast herself in the mould of Jayant's dreams and definitions of a good wife who has no
passions of her own. The sensitivity of both Naren and Indu are acute and both of them seek an expression of the authentic realities of themselves as individuals – Naren through music and Indu through her creative writing. This creativity in them puts them at odds with the tradition bound mechanical and monotonous regime of the world around them which seeks to crush their independent and creative impulses. The turmoil it generates within these two passionate young individuals, throwing them out of joints with members of their family and society, characterize their journey through life. What is more striking than these similarities are the qualities which differentiate them from each other. That’s why, the ends of their lives are opposite of each other. If Indu shows resilience to survive and ultimately to affirm her potentialities to transform her life; Naren succumbs to the pressures and ultimately slides into death by committing suicide.

Naren’s suicide, the novel shows, is the culmination of his alienation from society, from his own family and ultimately from life itself. He finds it too much to suffer disappointment, negation and nothingness. He is a young man whose sensitivity is not tempered and guided by an equally strong intellectual ability, so necessary to reason out one’s predicament and more towards affirmation of life with the awareness of its realities. The ability to learn from experience and emerge from crisis as a stronger individual, in control of the course of her life, is something which distinguishes Indu from Naren more sharply. He lacks the inner resources required to withstand the pressures of hostilities, rejection, loneliness and nothingness in his existence.

Deshpande through the treatment of experiences of alienation with their causes and consequences in the life of Naren sets up a subtle dramatic pattern of comparison and contrast with the protagonist, imparting width and complexity to the treatment of this theme. The treatment of Naren and Indu by showing striking differences between the response of Indu and of Naren to their alienating situations, the novelist also explodes the myth that men are strong and tough, and that women are weak and vulnerable.

The novel, thus, though centred around Indu, offers interesting and illuminating study into the psyche of men as well. Certainly, Naren’s character remains secondary and he occupies a small space in the slot, he has been rendered as a very gripping and complex figure who with his enigmatic appeal compulsively attracts readers to explore his character again and again. This pattern of the treatment of this theme, both in the life
of men and women, in its various forms in her early novels appears in her later novel *That Long Silence* as well, but with greater depth and richness.

**THAT LONG SILENCE**

The novel *That Long Silence* is a protest against the limitations of women's lives who are forced to remain silent and have to alienate themselves from their own dreams and desires in order to live according to the wishes of their male counterparts. Silence in the novel is a pervasive metaphor signifying withdrawal of men and women from society, from authentic experiences of human relationships and negation of their own needs and desires. It suggests loss of will and freedom in the face of coercive powers of traditional values and expectations throwing her characters into a state of helplessness, hopelessness and surrender to their alienating situations. If on the one hand Deshpande portrays the women of different sections and generations like Jaya, Kusum, Mukta, Ai, Ajji, Jeeja, Nayna and Manda who have all been trained in silence, then on the other hand she very successfully conveys the loneliness of male figures like Mohan and Kamat. Veena Sheshadri's comment sums up the essence of the novel: "The novel is not only about Jaya’s efforts to obliterate the silence that is suffocating her. It is also about the despair and resignation of women like Mohan’s mother, Jaya’s servant, Jaya’s mentally disturbed cousin Kusum. It also deals with Mohan’s silence which is the silence of a man who speaks but can find no one to listen to him."37

Jaya’s silence and her consequent alienation have their roots in her childhood because childhood experiences have left an indelible mark on her psyche affecting her adult life. Childhood is the time when the first lessons of social behaviour are taught to the child. As the society demands gender specific social behavior from its members, the children fall prey to gender based socialization in their early childhood starting the process of their otherisation. Though socialization is a powerful instrument which has enormous influence in conditioning a child’s psyche yet its abuse conditions the psyche of girl child so much that she unconsciously and automatically acquiesces to patriarchal paradigms, negating thereby her genuine experiences and urges. She is taught to withhold conceal and suppress her real self. The notion that women are basically inferior to men is forcibly instilled into her mind from the start but her rational thinking revolts against this
injustice. Like Saru, who resents the greater love and attention given to her brother Dhruva, Jaya also refers to her elder brother, Dinu, ironically as “Ai’s son”. She resents the undue attention her mother showers on her brother while she is ignored. So, traditional thinking and gender biased attitude of her mother inhibit her from making her mother her confidante. Hence, when the drama of her womanhood begins it is “agonising and terrible” in absence of motherly care and attention. Indifference of her mother creates antagonistic feelings in Jaya who develops only contempt for the slapdash ways of her mother. Anger and resentment of a daughter towards the all questioning mother is expressed in no uncertain terms when Jaya says, “She can’t dictate to me. I’ll do just what I want.” The antipathy gets augmented when Ai bestows the Dadar flat on Dada. Though Jaya eventually receives it from him, she had been resentful and hurt when she heard about this. The fury towards the mother stems also from her feeling of being betrayed by the hurry with which she disposes of property in her absence without her knowledge.

If mother arouses the feeling of alienation in Jaya, it is her father who provides emotional security to her by showering unconditional love on her. He names her Jaya which stands for victory. He makes her feel as someone special. He recognizes her talent and has great plans for her future. But all the plans for her future are nipped in the bud by his death. Father’s untimely death shatters her very being to pieces. She feels lonely and forlorn in his absence. The reins of her life are now in the hands of her mother and brother who teach her lessons of submission and obedience. They make her feel that she does not belong to her parental home. She does not get figured in the family tree prepared by Ramu Kaka because in his opinion she does not belong to their family. This remark makes her feel “not just inconsequential, but wholly bloated out” (143). This feeling is further aggravated by the advices given to her regarding her would be husband, as if getting married is her only destiny. Her intelligence and education has no value in their eyes. Rather she is chided by her grandmother for asking too many questions and is told that no husband can be comfortable with a woman who asks questions and retorts frequently Vanitamami advises her to cling to her husband even if he is unfaithful.

Thus, the liberal upbringing by father and the conventional one by her family members pull Jaya in opposite directions sundering her apart. It gives rise to a dilemma,
making her incapable of taking vital decisions of her life like marriage and her life partner. Father’s untimely death compels her to follow the wishes of her family members who want her to marry Mohan, the groom chosen by them.

If Saru and Indu marry to rebel against the family, Jaya, after her initial protest, consents to the proposal due to circumstantial pressures. Her marriage would not have taken place, as we gather from her retreat to the past, had her father been alive. However, the proposal is not thrust upon her, for she has been guided by many other factors. Marriage with Mohan would save her from being an additional burden to her relatives since Mohan demands no dowry. Moreover, she is well aware that Dada, her brother, wants to get rid of her as soon as possible. So Jaya, who has designed her life according to the desire of her family members, decides to marry Mohan. Like most other marriages, Jaya-Mohan marriage is also made for convenience ignoring the emotional affinity between them.

Marriage, in India, is more a social contract than an emotional bonding. Most of the marriages are arranged by family members by matching their social and economic status, caste and religion, ignoring completely likes and dislikes of the partners, especially the girl. The relationship, which is established on these superficial bases, is further maintained and nourished by traditional values of Shastras, which dominate the minds of Indian men and women. The Shastras make the man-woman partnership in marriage an indissoluble bond which continues even in subsequent lives. But the rationalization within Hindu moral philosophy at the level of “Dharma” and “Karma” works more to subdue and reconcile woman rather than man to her unavoidable duty and inevitable fate. The roots of such discrimination and patriarchal power lie in the essential philosophy of Hinduism, which reads in the divine male and female principle an ideal of cosmic harmony and not of sexual equality. The virtues of an ideal wife are encoded but not those of an ideal husband. Fidelity to her husband, ungrudging service, enduring hardships for his welfare, ready obedience and sacrifice of her own self-interests are the essential duties of the “bharya,” the wife, towards the “bharta,” the husband. All these codes and cannons for women dislocate her from the world of her own physical, emotional and intellectual needs and yearnings as individuals, thus forcing them into a
life meant to please others. In Indian myths also, the feminine identity is constructed in
the husband-wife relationship and most of the myths like that of Savitri and Sita make a
good woman synonymous with a good wife. Shashi Dashpande also uses the mythical
woman like Sita, Gandhari and Maitreyi to bring home the dilemma of Jaya who in spite
of being educated has to play the role of a “devoted wife” in line with these women. To
fit herself in the role of a devoted wife, she accepts the new name Suhasini given by her
husband on her wedding day. This change of name proves to be the first blow to her
identity as a human being. Jaya and Suhasini denote quite opposite meanings. Jaya means
victory and Suhasini means a soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman, who lovingly
nurtures her family. With this new name, it appears that the light-spirited and courageous
Jaya has been reduced to a devoted housewife. Like a devoted housewife she patterns her
life according to the likes and dislikes of her husband. She learns to suppress her own
feelings and emotions and react in the way her husband wants. Attending to the needs of
the husband and tending and caring for the children becomes her full time occupation.
She states in unequivocal terms that Mohan is her profession, career and means of
livelihood. She unconsciously follows her aunt’s advice to treat her husband as a
sheltering tree and like Ghandhari of the Mahabharata, symbolically bandages her eyes
and grows blind to his weaknesses. Like Sita, who followed her husband into exile, she
follows Mohan into a concrete jungle that is Bombay. Once there, like a devoted wife,
she has to wear huge glasses, get her eyebrows shaped and hair cut short to look exactly
like the wife of an executive. In the process, she becomes dwarfed and annihilated as an
individual. Her protest against this annihilation of self, though unconscious, is revealed
through the silence, which she adopts as a survival strategy.

Silence means long untold suffering mostly mental, which ultimately overcomes
the need to express one’s thoughts as an individual. Silence between husband and wife is
a clear indication of the incompatibilities they fail to adjust with. Differing cultural
backgrounds of Jaya and Mohan compel Jaya to maintain her silence. In the Indian
context there are clearly segregated areas for men and women, including areas of work.
The first quarrel between Jaya and Mohan results when, in her pregnancy, she asks
Mohan to cook the food. When she reciprocates his anger with her own, he goes silent.
When this silence grows from hours to days, she becomes uneasy and makes an effort to
reconcile. Then only she comes to know that her anger has shattered him. She learns that her anger makes her unwomanly in his eyes. Mohan’s accusation that his mother never raised her voice against his father, however badly he behaved to her, teaches her to hold her anger on a leash. Now onwards, she silences all vocal expressions of dissent. She is schooled to keep her anger and emotion under control. She has been goaded to think that it is a sin for a woman to raise her voice against her husband. That’s why, she silences all the frenetic emotions in her.

Thus, Jaya, like Indu, represses all her emotions and feelings. She learns to deceive by showing only that part of her personality to her husband that is acceptable to him. Through the examples of Jaya and Indu, Shashi Dashpande makes a significant point that marriage teaches women to use art of deception and suppression as survival strategy. In patriarchal families if women express their feelings and emotions openly and honestly, they may irritate and infuriate their husbands. And they are well aware that it is not safe and wise to cause an aversion in the minds of their husbands because a “husband is like a sheltering tree” (137). They have to keep in mind the pithy and unforgettable dictum, sarcastically yet realistically stated by Simon de Beauvoir—“To ‘catch’ a husband is an art, to ‘hold’ him is a job – and one in which great competence is called for.”39 To hold her husband unto herself Jaya uses her competence of silence.

This silence on Jaya’s part gets strengthened due to diversity in their outlook. Mohan disdains the fanciful and is proudly matter-of-fact. His passion for neatness and order clashes with Jaya’s ways for whom neatness is a hard discipline. But she tries hard to change her views, and her efforts to please Mohan push her into an endless abyss of domesticity. Domestic work usually provides woman with an occupation, an activity, but provides no escape from immanence and there is little affirmation of her individuality in it. The tedium and boredom of the work done mechanically leads not to any realization of creativity but marks only an alienation from her deepest impulses. In their Churchgate bungalow, there were “gadgets that had to be kept in order, the glassware that had to sparkle, the furniture and curios that had to be kept spotless and dust free...” (25). This monotonous routine makes family life unbearable for Jaya for “few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition.”40 Perusal of her diaries only provides a skeletal outline of that life of a housewife leaving behind the
essential core, the agonized cries – “I can’t hope, I can’t manage, I can’t go on” (70). It shocks her to realize that leitmotif of her life has been reduced as to what she shall make for breakfast or lunch. She feels that her married life has turned out to be unbearable, monotonous and is moving according to a fixed pattern, not of her own will and choice: “Worse than anything else had been the boredom of the unchanging pattern, the unchanging monotony” (48).

This feeling of boredom is quite apparent in Jaya’s sexual relationships also. Happy married life and healthy sexual relationship go hand in hand. Sex becomes a necessary and intimating element in every marriage. But to a Deshpande protagonist it often becomes an instrument of power or an alienating element. Marriage and sex are two sides of the same coin but men and women see it differently. While men consider marriage as a license to physical intimacy, women demand to be guided to sex through emotional intimacy. The difference in their attitude to sex pervades their married life, though this area remains undiscussed between Jaya and Mohan as in the case of other couples. Sensual memories remain the coldest in her, for their relationship started with repudiation of her theory of first “there’s love, then there’s sex” (95). Just as this marriage is his decision and her role is only to acquiesce, the physical intimacy also is taken for granted by Mohan. He, like most others of his gender, fails to realize that feminine sexuality is a complex phenomenon with its sensual and emotional overtures.

For Mohan, sex is an act in itself, silent wordless act, but for Jaya an intense experience. Hence, she too gets disenchanted, like Saru, after a romantic beginning where she earnestly follows the women’s magazines instructions to make herself appealing to him. Now after seventeen years of living together the reality hits her: “...he would have slept with me faithfully twice a week whether I creamed my face or not, whether I brushed my hair a hundred times or not, whether I wanted him to or not” (96). Sex, thus, becomes a mechanical action which forces the woman to hide her feelings leaving her both ashamed and terrified of her frenetic emotions. She disciplines herself, like Indu, to sleep with him, without any desire. Sexual dissatisfaction leads her to doubt the very existence of emotional involvement between man and woman. “Love? No, I knew nothing of it,” she bluntly confesses (153). The heroine of The Dark Holds No Terrors,
Saru, makes a similar unhappy discovery: “Love ... how she scorned the word now. There was no such thing between man and woman” (165).

Thus, women like Jaya or Saru who are romantic to start with, become disenchanted with the institution called marriage. The relationship of marriage, thus, becomes dissatisfying to Jaya – the one devoid of meaning, since it existed too much on physical plane. She feels that she and Mohan do not make up a family, a home. They were just a “man and a woman married for seventeen years,” (8) but no bridges of understanding and love between them. Compulsion rather than companionship becomes the hallmark of their married life. Shashi Deshpande uses very suggestive image of a “pair of bullocks yoked together” to describe Jaya’s married life. Their relationship of marriage rests on compromise like that of bullocks rather than love. They share the burden of married life like bullocks but neither of them knows whether they love each other or not. Out of social fear and pain of moving in opposite directions they continue to be husband and wife. To keep the facade of happy married life, Jaya has to pay a heavy price by silencing forcibly all her despair, anger, dissatisfaction and disappointments. This silence and emptiness is not only the fate of Jaya, but the novel has many other female characters whose married life is replete with despair. These women spend a lifetime in muted existence. Anuradha Roy, in her discussion of repressive forces, stresses that the silence that predominates the world of Deshpande’s women is not that of peace and tranquility; rather, it is an amalgam of their pain, anger, frustration, defensiveness and rejection. Silence takes various shapes in her works: the despairing silence of Mohan’s mother, the resigned silence of Vimala, the silence of Kusum who goes mad, the silence of Jeeja and so on. Adoption of silence as a survival strategy and resolution not to fight for their right is a clear indication of alienation of these characters from their selves as well as their environment. Through the examples of various women belonging to different strata of society, Shashi Dashpande wants to bring home the fact that this feeling afflicts women of all sections of society, their social status, education, economic status notwithstanding.

What Simone de Beauvoir wrote in 1949 – “marriage incites man to capricious imperialism” – holds equally good to this day. Among human beings the temptation to
dominate is universally irresistible and traditional marriage provides this opportunity to men. In orthodox Indian marriages, it is not enough for the husband to be approved and admired; he wants immediate unquestioning obedience to his commands. All the resentments accumulated during childhood and later life get purged from him at home, as he lets loose his authority upon his wife. Mohan’s father is that kind of husband who goes to extremes in establishing his power over his wife, Mohan’s mother. She is an excellent example of a helpless wife and mother. Her husband, a drunkard, returns late at night and makes unjust demands on her which she puts up with stoic silence. Jaya recalls some of the instances where Mohan speaks about his mother and she “can see a picture of extraordinary clarity and vividness – the woman crouching in front of the dying fire, sitting blank and motionless…” (35).

This blankness is a clear sign of utter lostness of her human and individual self. According to Mohan her mother was tough, but Jaya sees only despair that would not voice itself. Her struggle is bitter and continuous in which silence and surrender are her only weapons. But when her forbearance cannot match his cruelties, her despair gives way to self-punishment: “And then, as I watched, she began hitting herself on the face. Her hands were all floury, and wet too, and her face soon became white and floury. Soon there were red patches as she went on and on hurting herself” (38).

The example of Mohan’s mother proves the authenticity of Simon de Beauvoir’s saying that “marriage diminishes man, which is often true, but almost always it annihilates woman.” This imperialism or the tendency to dominate not only annihilates woman when used by man but proves equally devastating for the man when exercised by woman. Shashi Deshpande suggests that this tendency is not restricted to any specific age, gender or relationship by showing the deleterious effect it has on the relationships like mother-son, mother-in-law- daughter-in-law and father-son, besides the one between husband and wife.

If an overpowering mother vitiates the life of a daughter in The Dark Holds No Terrors, other-ajji spoils the very life of her own son, Chandumama through her domineering behavior. Chandumama, who used to be an ambitious young man aspiring to do his F.R.C.S., is reduced to a ‘dull, small-town doctor’ by his mother. Moreover, he is forced to marry a woman for whom he had no feelings, resulting in his affairs with all
sorts of women. Thus, the overbearing mother deprives him of his freedom to choose a life which could fulfil his own authentic dreams, desires and aspirations. This has a morally and psychologically castrating effect upon the son, who is rendered incapable of taking vital decisions even about his career and mate in life. In this way, the dominating role of mother in his life deprives him of not only from realizing his chosen goal in his career but also is responsible for a permanent alienation from his wife. The way he indulges in ‘shoddy affairs’ with all kinds of women only shows his inner emptiness, frustration and loneliness.

Its consequences are reflected in the kind of nothingness and helplessness which his wife also has to suffer. This is because the emasculating authority of the mother affects his psyche to the extent that he fails to take any responsibility of his wife, Vanita. The matters become worse for Vanitamami when her mother-in-law takes full control of her life and she is forced to lead a passive existence with no choice of her own even in her personal matters. Denial of care from her husband and of satisfaction through motherhood, reduce her life to a mechanical routine of fasts and rituals. Thus, the power of other-ajji alienates Chandumama and Vanitamami from each other and from their own individual selves. That’s why, they fail to achieve any sense of relatedness, love or union at a physical or emotional level, even as husband and wife, and their marriage proves to be a dysfunctional bondage.

Another example of an authoritative mother who obliterates the very personality of her son as a man has been presented in the novel through the figure of Vimala’s mother-in-law. The very fact that she has been referred to in the novel as Vimala’s mother-in-law suggests that she is the traditional authoritative, nagging and sharp tongued old woman who is critical and highly oppressive towards the daughter-in-law. Like the other-ajji, she too, appears like a devouring mother who has reduced his son to a complete non-entity. That’s why there is hardly any reference to his role as a husband of Vimala in the novel. This indicates that Vimala is without any kind of support – emotional, moral or material – in the house of her in-laws where she suffers alone in a state of utter loneliness. Like Vanitamami, she too is sterile, which underlines nothingness, meaninglessness and emptiness in her life, bereft of fructifying relationships and purpose as a woman. She, therefore, adopts silence as a defense mechanism to fight
against her in-laws' indifference. Being childless, she is not taken care of when she suffers from ovarian tumour and subsequent bleeding. There is nobody with whom she can share her suffering. Consequently, she dies in silent agony, reliving her mother's fate. She used to claim to be different from her mother, but their suffering binds them together in a common fate. Jaya realizes it when she remarks, "Yet, I can see something in common between them, something that links the destinies of two ... the silence in which they died" (39).

If Mohan's mother, Vanitamami and Vimala bear the untoward conditions of life patiently then there is Kusum for whom life's challenges and demands exceed her coping strength and she succumbs to it through neurosis and consequent suicide. By killing herself Kusum tries to end that feeling of alienation and despair that has been inextricable part of her personality since her childhood. Her fate is sealed the day she is born to hopeless and feckless parents. Her father, always busy with smoking and movies, and mother with a long line of children could hardly provide her any prop to sail through life. Insecurity, apprehension and rejection borne out of this pernicious home environment becomes essential part of her psyche which she carries forward in her married life. The burden and demands of wifehood and motherhood prove too much for the shaky and unsure Kusum, making her neurotic. Carl Jung's observation that neurosis results when there is a clash between an individual's attempt to adjust to some situation and his constitutional inability to meet the challenge explains Kusum's case very well. Neurotic Kusum desperately needs the love and company of her family members specially children who despise her with equal intensity. Maslow observes, "Most neurosis involves along with other complex determinants, ungratifying wishes for safety, for belongingness and identification for close relationships and for self-respect and prestige." Sensing the uselessness, rejection and indifference of her family members she kills herself by jumping into the well.

This type of suppression and domination of women is not restricted to middle class of the society only; rather, it equally affects the women of lower strata also. For the first time, in this novel, Shashi Deshpande introduces the women characters belonging to lower section of society to reveal the fact that the feelings of despair, angst and
helplessness are a common lot of women. Being less sensitive and more resilient, these women accept their destiny with equanimity.

Jeeja, Jaya’s maid servant endures her sufferings and rejection silently. She is very dependable and hard working that earns her extra money. But her husband tortures her and extorts money from her as he has lost his job in the company and takes to drinking. Since she has no children, he brings another woman. Instead of being angry with him she blames herself for it, as she has failed to give him a child. Even after her husband’s death she takes great pains to bring up his child, who steps into his father’s shoes and starts drinking. The story of Jeeja’s life gets repeated in the life of Tara, her daughter-in-law. Unlike Jeeja, she bemoans her fate and prays for her husband’s death. At this, Jeeja chides her as her husband keeps ‘Kumkum’ alive on her. In spite of this much torture and exploitation these woman cannot think of living without their husbands, their ultimate security. For these women the fetters of traditional marriage are hard to dispense with and their lives become an unacknowledged martyrdom in return.

Thus, Shashi Deshpande gives perfect examples of women who always submit to insults, injuries and humiliations with a tremendous patience and without any complaint. In the absence of any escape route, these women find solace in obsession, masochism or mental slavery, leading to physical decay, disease and death. The social ethos is the major cause behind the sad plight of these women. They are forced to subordinate their own needs to those of their family and to bear the exploitation and suffering without any complaint. The orthodox Indian view interprets any resistance to its androcentric codes as being the influence of western decadence. Even today the society continues to cling to the forms of female oppression, exalting and glorifying them with the practised rhetoric. The continued exaltation of self-effacing norms creates an environment which pressurizes a woman to accept or at least not to resist them. Often silence is the only option to a woman in such situations.

If marital bond is fraught with silence and discontentment then motherhood, the natural corollary of matrimony, is also far from being satisfying for Jaya. In literature and elsewhere a mother is variously compared to the earth and sea to denote her fertility, infinite patience, power and resilience. In the figurative sense she is goodness, kindness,
sympathy and love. But the mothers that Deshpande presents are not the women who are symbols of happiness and contentment. They are on the contrary, presented as seething volcanoes, heavy with the burden of broken childhoods and frustrated conjugal lives. When Rahul is born, Jaya feels uneasy both with the infant and with the newly acquired status of motherhood: “I had the same fearful sense of being unable to cope, the same certainty of being a failure” (173). She does not even know how to suckle the new born baby. Her mother’s contemptuous remark – “Not able to feed your own child?” (173) – makes her realize her inability to play the role of a mother. Moreover, when Rahul performs badly in school and is asked by Mohan what he wants, his answer, “Nothing,” unnerves Jaya and she thinks, “…is it I who have taught him to believe in nothing?” (50)

Thus, Jaya fails her son, conveying the feelings of emptiness and nothingness to him. Deshpande’s treatment of the theme of alienation often brings into focus the effects of the life and personalities of parents upon their children. If it is Jaya’s nothingness and emptiness which passes into the life of Rahul then Mohan’s complexes, born out of his poverty-ridden childhood, make things worse compounded for him. His deprived childhood has left in Mohan’s psyche a lurking fear lest his family should slip back into the same degrading economic circumstances. That’s why, he is so vehement in his desires that his son must do well in studies to have a secure and prosperous future. It, also, is a typical case of Indian fathers who thrust their own ambitions on to their sons and seek to achieve through them what has eluded them somehow in their own lives. This is evident from the way Mohan sets very high academic goals for his son, Rahul, who fails to come up to his father’s expectations. In order to improve his academic performance, Mohan asks Rahul to go for tuitions which he opposes vehemently. But he becomes helpless and gives in to the authority of his father, who refuses to listen to his mind. His helplessness and frustration are further intensified by Mohan’s frequent comparison of his own poverty-ridden childhood and good academic performance with that of Rahul, who fails to perform well despite all the facilities available to the later. These constant reminders from his father about his failures put immense pressure on his mind blocking all the possibilities of dialogue between them; and Rahul “listened (to his father) silently, denying nothing, not excusing himself” (49). This blockage of communication further denies him any support or sympathy from Mohan, a hostile authority. Feelings of anger
and rejection take the place of love and respect for the father. But being a son, he cannot express these feelings openly and therefore, he has to suppresses them. The suppression of these negative feelings eats into his psyche forcing him to withdraw deeper into himself. When suppression becomes unbearable it finds an expression in the form of revolt. Rahul revolts by running away from home when he gets a suitable occasion. This move on Rahul's part clearly shows the extent of helplessness and alienation of Rahul from his own home environment and failure of Mohan as a father.

Thus, both Mohan and Jaya, in different ways, fail to establish communication with their son and erect barriers that separate him from them completely. It fills, Jaya in particular, with a nagging feeling of guilt for failing to win the love and confidence of her son by not understanding his mind and not supporting him in his moments of tension and difficulties as a child. This frustration of Jaya, both as a wife and as a mother, perhaps, plays a role in her efforts to find her fulfilment and consolation by pursuing her hobby of writing.

Like Saru who is a doctor and Indu who is a journalist, Jaya is not a professional in the conventional sense. Yet she is a promising columnist who tries her hand at writing to seek digression from the drudgery of household chores. In the opinion of Vimala Rama Rao, "Jaya is one of the rare narrative voices in Indian English fiction who poses and displays a literary sensibility commensurate with her fictional role as a writer telling her own story, one whose college education and reading habits are in evidence in her speaking voice. This indeed is an achievement." She has made a good beginning with a story about a man "... who could not reach out to his wife except through her body" (144). Mohan feels a close resemblance between her prize winning story and their personal life. Fear of offending Mohan and jeopardizing her marriage compels her to relinquish all those stories that had been taking shape in her: "I had been scared – scared of hurting Mohan, scared of jeopardizing the only career I had, my marriage" (144).

She, however, does not stop writing but writes that kind of stuff which pleases the publisher and makes her husband feel proud of her as a writer. To an intensely thinking woman like Jaya, these light "skimming over life" sketches provide only an escape, a safehole. The apt image of a worm crawling into a hole describes the budding writer dwindling into stereotyped, house-wife columnist. Thus, her career of house-wife...
annihilates her career as a writer because she is forced to suppress the expression of her true self in her writing.

Shashi Deshpande, time and again in her novels, reveals how authentic self of individuals both men and women, comes in clash with cramping traditions and demands to conform to the life of social respectability. The tensions and conflicts it generates are common to both the sexes. There are a number of examples in her fiction through which she provides flashes of insights into various forms of experiences of alienation and loneliness suffered by men as well, on this count. In That Long Silence, if Jaya smothers the voice of the true intellectual and writer in her, Makrandmama has to face social isolation and scornful rejection from his own family for refusing to kill the actor in him for social acceptability. He is despised and disowned by everybody in the family including his own mother for belittling the status and honour of the family “by becoming that disgraceful thing, an actor” (43). He has to pay a heavy price for adoption of a profession of his own liking against the narrow considerations of respectability. His offence gets compounded when he joins a professional troupe of actors and later, movies in Bombay. For this sin of his, he is denied all sorts of monetary and emotional support from his family and suffers breakdown of all sorts of connections and communication with the members of his family. He, thus, feels acutely “alienated from his family...reviled and abused by them” (43). The jolt which he gets from the severance of all familial ties is clearly revealed in “his weak chin, his vulnerable, unsure eyes” (43). Indifferent family fails him even during his last days and he “went away to the sanatorium at Panchagani to die” (42). His death could not wipe away the anger and contempt of other-ajji who never spoke of him even after his death.

Deshpande, in this way, through the examples of Jaya and Makrand exposes the predicament of sensitive individuals with artistic leanings and interests, who often find themselves outsiders, lonely and alienated in the world of quotidian values and false social prestige.

Deshpande repeatedly points out, through situations and characters in her novels, the disruptive and disjunctive effects of various social pressures on the life of her men and women. If Makrand is condemned to a life of alienation for following a profession not approved by middle class’ obsession with respectability, excessive concern for his
(Mohan’s) social image as a husband forces a separation between Jaya’s authentic artistic self and the role of a writer of ‘Seeta’ columns she has to assume.

In fact Mohan’s own life and personality reveal the fragmented man he himself is because of the dissonance caused by the suppression of his desires and the resultant psychological complexes. Like Jaya, Mohan is also not at peace with himself. He has many suppressed desires and complexes which control his present behavior. Memories of his childhood are not the ones he can cherish. His childhood is poisoned by scarcity, poverty, violence and strained relationships of his parents which have a great impact on his psyche. Being the son of a poor and drunkard father, he has to fall back on the mercy of a rich man for his education. Thus, his childhood, full of deprivations, creates in him a desire to attain all those things which were beyond his reach earlier. By marrying Jaya, a cultured and English speaking girl, he fulfils his childhood dream. His childhood complexes become a part and parcel of his nature. That’s why, he wants his wife to be obedient and submissive and dutiful like his mother. According to Jaya, he himself is a dutiful son, husband and father. But, in all these roles which he plays, his soul is missing. Reason being, he has bartered his soul for monetary success. The life based on such fragile foundation is bound to wither.

Mohan gets the shock of his life when he is caught along with his boss taking commission and enquiry is on. He has to leave his office till the enquiry is completed. Without his official rank, he is a pitiable shadow of his former self. He has to leave his Churchgate bungalow and make do with humble Dadar flat of his wife. His reduction in status is symbolized by his wife’s refusal to hand over the flat’s keys to him. In the changed circumstances he looks “a sad, bewildered man,” his former self-assurance deserting him completely. He feels listless, bored and panicky: “Deprived of his routine, his files, his telephone, his appointments, he seemed to be no one at all” (24). In the absence of his social status and position, he feels quite helpless: “I don’t think I stand a chance. I’m finished” (9). Thus, the facade of success and achievement which he has created around himself withers at the slightest stroke and the loneliness and fear of Mohan get exposed.

A person who himself is a prey of complexes and loneliness can hardly offer anything worthwhile to his wife. He marries Jaya not out of love but to display an
English speaking wife as a possession. The marriage, the very foundation of which is based not on affinity but on convenience, is bound to fail both the partners, sensitive one the most. Jaya being more sensitive and emotional bears the brunt. Dissatisfaction in marriage stifles her very personality making her a failure on every front – wife, mother and writer. What she cannot get through her husband, she tries to find through her relationship with Kamat.

Though Jaya’s relation with Kamat is not well-followed up in the novel, it can be read as a projection of her discontented marital relation with her husband. What attracts her most to Kamat is that he is warm, friendly and companionable. While the other males condescend, Kamat treats her as an equal. She acknowledges: “With this man I had not been a woman. I had been just myself – Jaya. There had been an ease in our relationship I had never known in any other” (153). This ease makes her share her feelings with him which she never dared to share with Mohan or even her father. He plays the role of a brother, lover and father for Jaya. He encourages her like an elder brother and when her writings do not find publishers, he advises her to spew out her anger in her writing. He compliments her like a lover saying, “Your name is like your face” (152). Like a father he comforts her by holding her when she shares the most tragic event of her life – the death of her father – with him. This embrace of Kamat arouses in her an urge to respond sexually to his touch, but she withdraws in order to safeguard her marriage. Regarding this move on Jaya’s part, R.K. Sharma’s conclusion that sex had always seemed “such a momentous thing to her” and “they did have sex occasionally” seems to be a misinterpretation, as a careful reading of the text reveals that Jaya never forgets her marital status and does not succumb to carnal desires. Shashi Deshpande herself remarked in an interview: “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.” Thus, Kamat is brought in the novel as a foil to Mohan. Though Jaya’s intimacy with him does not lead to any physical relationship between the two, she has to hide even the affinity with Kamat to save her marriage. That is the reason why she leaves the room of Kamat like a coward when she finds him dead on the floor. She has to smother her feelings in
order to be a good wife. Her marriage again works as a hindrance in her fulfilment as a human being.

Kamat, akin to Naren, is a critic of Jaya who makes her realize her worth as a human being and as a writer. But, like Naren, he is unable to save himself from ultimate human destiny i.e. loneliness and alienation. Kamat is middle-aged bulky widower “whose life is structured to loneliness” (157). He shares his feelings of loneliness with Mukta, Jaya’s neighbour. After his first heart attack he becomes fearful of death. But he has no one of his own with whom he can share his fear. So he calls Mukta and gives her the keys of his flat for he might die any moment. His loneliness and fear are exposed when he says, “I’ve lived alone for so many years, but dying alone is a different thing” (186). His fear comes true when Jaya leaves him alone on his death. Though he was always there to listen to her and to help her, but she failed him even at the time of his death when he needed her most. Hence, Kamat lives and dies in utter loneliness.

Thus, loneliness seems to be the watchword of the lives of Jaya, Rahul, Mohan, Kusum, Vanitamami and Kamat. Some of them like Rahul, Mohan, Kusum and Kamat succumb to their loneliness, but some courageous ones like Jaya try to find out the reason behind their loneliness and try to bring amends in their nature and circumstances to participate in social and personal relationship more actively and bring harmony in life.

To achieve the harmonious view towards life all the three heroines Saru, Indu and Jaya adopt more or less the same route. A similar progress in protagonists’ life is portrayed in them. All the three protagonists Saru, Indu and Jaya are shown to be in a state of confusion at the beginning. Slowly as the novels unfold, they go through a process of introspection, self-analysis and self-realization by going back to their parental home. The return to the childhood home, thus, binds these three women together. Apart from the psychological and subconscious motivation behind this move practically, this distancing gives them the opportunity to take stock of their lives. Away from the hectic space of their city lives, they seem to be looking at themselves with the maximum possible objectivity.

If the occasion for going back to their parental home is provided by the news of mother’s death in Saru’s case and by Akka’s call in Indu’s case then Jaya’s return to her
Dadar flat with her husband is caused by a need to leave their Churchgate bungalow due to Mohan’s involvement in some malpractice. Here, Jaya is completely left to herself, devoid of her routine of a housewife, her children being away to a holiday trip. Without his office, Mohan also does not make demand on her. Being stripped off her only career of housewife, and freed from her daily burden of repetitive chores, she experiences a strange sense of freedom. As Adele King in her book review says, “Jaya finds her normal routine so disrupted that for the first time she can look at her life and attempt to decide who she really is?” Jaya finds herself in a void. Freed momentarily from the drudgery that had become her life, she confronts the ghost of her “old self”. Jaya realizes the “nothingness of what had seemed a busy and full life” (25). In her enthusiasm to play the role of a wife and mother to perfection, she finds she has obliterated that self in her, which as a child, was “heady with excitement of finding unexpected resources within herself” (187). By accepting social and familial roles imposed upon her, she has eclipsed her own needs. Jaya’s situation reminds her of the “stillness, the silence” of sitting in a stationery train. The illusion of movement is created when the train next to her moves. Deshpande uses the image effectively to indicate that activity and meaning in a woman’s life are directly related to the needs of the man in her life. Jaya realizes: “Your own movement has been only an illusion. You were right where you were all along” (24). In her broodings, Jaya finds that her conviction that communication between Mohan and herself, as man and woman, was impossible, has led her to retreat into silence because, “It was so much simpler to say nothing, so much less complicated” (99).

The defense mechanism of silence can be adopted till the saturation point of tolerance is reached. Once the limit is crossed, it stops working. In Jaya’s case limits of her tolerance is crossed on the day when Mohan, in a fit of disgust, blurts out that he has been earning extra penny only for Jaya and children. For the first time in her conjugal life, Jaya feels a strange emotion of anger at this unjustified accusation: “... it was at that moment that the first real emotion had entered into me. Anger” (9). She sloughs of her unnatural garb of submission and dons the one of aggression, anger and revenge. In a belittling manner she bursts into laughter at his accusation. It proves too much for Mohan that someone should laugh derisively at his failure and he abruptly leaves home before Jaya could give her explanation: “I didn’t mean to laugh, I wasn’t laughing at you,
I was laughing at everything – marriage, us, this whole absurd existence we call life...” (122). It is this desertion by Mohan which leads Jaya to introspect what went wrong with them.

Mohan’s absence unnerves Jaya and she thinks she would fall apart. When Mohan is no longer there, Jaya realizes that she cannot relate to the outside world without her husband. It is he who gives meaning to her life. Disappearance of Rahul, who has gone with Ashok and Rupa on a holiday trip, adds fuel to the fire. The carefully built sparrow house appears to be cracked and the insides cruelly exposed: “It was like a house collapse during the monsoon. There was something desolating about the ease with which what had seemed so substantial fell away, almost contemptuously, leaving behind an embarrassing nakedness”(174). She ponders over various options for dealing with the crisis such as suicide and plain confession of crime, but dismisses all of them as impracticable. She passes several days in a traumatic state. She experiences a fine quivering in her abdomen. She does not have Kamat now to assure her of her significance and sanity nor the distant relative, mad Kusum, against whom she could test her sanity. Inevitably, therefore, her “sense of confusion” and turmoil meet her with brutal force: “I could feel myself gasping, drowning in the darkness, the wild, flailing, panic stricken movements ... taking me lower and lower into the vortex”(125). As her conflict reaches climacteric proportions she makes an even more frank admission of “a feeling of total disorientation” (177).

In this state of total disorientation, she goes out of the house and walks aimlessly in the streets and alleys of Bombay because she cannot go on with the crushing burden of her marriage thrust upon her. The most trying moment comes to Jaya in her life when she finds two men kneading the breasts of a narcotic smoking, well to do girl, at the bus stop. Her request to stop the indecency evokes hearty laughter from the men. In her unconscious she identifies the girl at the bus-stop with her daughter Rati and the prospect of a similar future for Rati derives her crazy. After reaching home she keeps on ringing the bell of her apartment and keeps raving incoherently. She continues to be in delirium even the next day.

The impact of this specific incident coupled with the cumulative effect of the events of the past few days has been so deep on her that her psyche transfers some of its
tension to her body which reacts adversely under the pressure. She plunges headlong into high temperature. Next day when she comes out of her emotional upheaval she decides to take refuge in her talent of writing. She decides to unburden herself by writing the story of her life, ‘That Long Silence.’ “The act of unburdening herself through self-expression,” observes Kamini Dinesh, “becomes for her a creative process. It is not merely a reliving of particular moments of the past but coming to terms with herself....”

By writing about the past Jaya tries to blot out the silence maintained for a long time. She decides to ‘plug that hole’ by speaking and erasing the silence between her and Mohan. Her writing proves cathartic for her: “Well, I’ve achieved this. I’m not afraid any more. The panic has gone. I’m Mohan’s wife, I had thought, and cut off the bits of me that had refused to be Mohan’s wife. Now I know that kind of a fragmentation is not possible” (191).

Thus, articulation of her life teaches her that fragmentation is not possible. The decision to remain whole fills her with vigour and vitality. After the purgation, like other protagonists, Jaya too realizes the need of interdependence. She feels that life cannot be lived in vacuum. That's why, she realizes that she can have her identity only if she has Mohan with her. Like Indu and Saru she does not choose the path of open revolt rather she tries to seek her individuality within the ambit of marriage. Knowledge dawns upon Jaya that marriage is a reciprocal arrangement, a complementary situation and she observes that meaningful co-existence is possible through understanding, respect and compassion and not through domination and subjugation. That's why, she rejects her habit of total submission. She decides that now onwards she will not play a second fiddle to Mohan. She will not look for clues in Mohan’s face and give him the answer he wants. Rather she will express her own opinion whether he likes it or not. In Sanskrit drama, she remembers, women characters were not allowed to speak Sanskrit. They had to use Prakrit instead. Jaya feels that she has been using Prakrit for all these years. Time is up now for using Sanskrit. That means she has now acquired moral courage not to be led by the rules laid by society for the subjugation of woman.

Having realized her position vis-a-vis Mohan, she rejects the image of two bullocks yoked together signaling a loveless couple. Instead she looks at herself and
Mohan as two individuals with independent minds: “Two bullocks yoked together – that was how I saw the two of us the day we came here, Mohan and I. Now I reject that image. It’s wrong. If I think of us in that way, I condemn myself to a lifetime of disbelief in ourselves” (191). Leaving aside the feeling of disbelief, she is hopeful that a positive change will come over their life and relationship though she knows that human beings don’t change overnight: “It’s possible that we may not change even over long periods of time. But we can always hope” (193). This hope sustains life and makes life livable.

This type of intense soul-searching provides her enough knowledge to make choice in life because without knowledge choice is irrelevant. She is reminded of Sanskrit words – Yathecchasi tatha kuru (do as you desire) – from the Bhagavad Gita. These words of Lord Krishan to his disciple Arjuna, put emphasis on the necessity of making choice. Realizing the implication of this saying she chooses to stop writing the ‘Seeta’ column which symbolizes her giving up of traditional role model of wife and decides to write what she wants to write. Sumitra Kukretri very appropriately remarks, “The realization that she can have her own way – Yathecchasi tatha kuru – gives a new confidence to Jaya. This is her emancipation.”

One major sense in which Jaya can be said to have achieved emancipation is that she accepts her own responsibility for her miserable plight. She admits that she was used to the cosy life arranged by Mohan and did not like to disturb her sheltered life through uncomfortable questions. Her pretence of an ideal housewife may be compared with Sartre’s concept of bad faith. According to Sartre, “All sorts of pretences, pretentiousness and willful ignorance are obstacles to free choice and are therefore morally bad.”49 Man is condemned to be free, wrote Sartre, and yet man does not exercise his freedom as he is afraid to come out of his comfortable life and face the reality. Almost in a similar way Jaya opted for comfort and safety that led to her own subjugation. With this knowledge she cannot forgive herself and therefore, like Indu, stops blaming others.

With “All Well” news from Mohan, Jaya, like Indu, seems to return to her cocoon of marital safety but with a renewed awareness and confidence. Like Indu, Jaya strives for and obtains certain autonomy. Indu and Jaya’s return home is not defeatism but the triumph of values of institution of marriage and relationships. Jaya’s situation 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.” Knowing that their mind and vision cannot be denied to them, knowing that they have achieved personhood, found their voice both Indu and Jaya return to society to become a part of it. Michael Rosenthal’s statement in *Virginia Woolf* regarding Mrs. Ramsay and Lily can be extended to include Indu and Jaya as well: “What unites ... them, despite their vast personal differences, however, is their mutual reverence for life and their desire to make something ordered and whole out of the flux around.”

This desire of protagonists – Saru, Indu and Jaya – to make their life ordered and to realize their human potentials, however, appears to be limited to their personal life and to the domain of thinking and willing only. The study of all these three novels shows that their thoughts and decisions are yet to find an expression in the form of actions. But what distinguishes the protagonists of these novels from other men and women, who fail to overcome their feelings of helplessness, nothingness and loneliness, is their greater sensitivity and intellectual ability to analyze and understand their situation, coupled with the will to emerge out of their crisis and take control of their life. Deshpande’s treatment of this theme, in these early novels, clearly reveals that she is able to unravel the secrets of the minds of male characters with as much ease and dexterity as that of female ones. The analysis of this theme, through comparison and contrast of the predicaments of various men and women, gives depth and complexity to it. One notices that the characters, who fail to come out of their experiences of alienation, remain static, unable to confront their situations in a dynamic and affirmative manner. That’s why, their roles remain secondary, accenting by contrast the strength and potentials of the central figures. This underlines the writer’s vision of life, characterized by hope and faith in human will, to affirm the value of human life and dignity.
NOTES


All subsequent references to the text of the novel are from the same edition, and page numbers in all such cases have been given within parentheses immediately after the quotations.


11 Premila Paul, p. 31.
12 Sarabit Sandhu, p. 21.

13 D. Maya, “The Struggle for Selfhood in Shashi Deshpande’s Female Protagonists,” *Alienation and Identity Crisis in American Fiction and in Indian Fiction in English*, ed. K. Radha (TheruVannanthapuram; r.p., 1996), p. 120.


All subsequent references to the text of the novel are from the same edition, and page numbers in all such cases have been given within parentheses immediately after the quotations.

20 Beauvoir, p. 295.

21 Ibid., p. 335.


31Beauvoir, p. 501.


34Y.S.Sunita Reddy, p. 43.


All subsequent references to the text of the novel are from the same edition, and page numbers in all such cases have been given within parentheses immediately after the quotations.

39 Beauvoir, p. 486.

40 Ibid., p. 470.

41 Ibid., p. 483.


