CHAPTER II

THE POSITION OF FEMALE CHILDREN IN INDIAN SOCIETY

Elaine Showalter in her article entitled “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness” states the impact of environment on women writers as:

The female psyche can be studied as the product or construction of cultural forces. Language, too, comes back into the picture, as we consider the social dimensions and determinants of language use, the shaping of linguistic behaviour by cultural ideals. A cultural theory acknowledges that there are important differences between women as writers: class, race, nationality, and there are literary determinants as significant as gender. Nonetheless, women’s culture forms a collective experience that binds women writers to each other over time and space. (197)

This collective experience by Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari persuades them to study the female psyche of girl children as the product of cultural forces and show the gradual changes in their life style from the early twentieth century. Language comes back in the picture when the social dimensions and the cultural ideals that outline their vision are considered. They show the role of girl children in Indian families, their wishes, expectations, work load, anxiety, desperation, demand for equal priority, awareness about their career and their revolt to free themselves from the clutches that bind them. They depict how the young girls rebel to liberate themselves from the rules that stand as
hurdles in their path towards progress. Whenever chances are given they try to widen their scopes by escaping from the authority.

According to Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari the girls of modern era are smarter than their ancestors in identifying their needs that are to be demanded from the elders. When their desires and needs are denied they become annoyed and raise their voice to attain their objective. Rather than by men folk they are instructed to be obedient, subservient and docile by their mothers and grandmothers who understand the expectation of the tradition bound Indian society. The young girls protest against the advices and counseling offered which curb their liberty. They think that they can be liberated through education. They aspire to be economically self-reliant. They achieve their target and become economically independent but problems bud from unexpected angle after marriage. They realise the real position of women in the Indian society and the notion behind the advices of elders. At first they think that their mothers and grandmothers are the obstacles in their way to progress. After crossing their adolescence they understand the role of women in the tradition bound Indian society and their struggle for existence. They realize that the mothers and grandmothers are the real tutors to girls from whom they gain the required strength to face the marital problems with ease. The Laws of Manu rightly states, “The father a hundred times more than a teacher, / But a mother a thousand times more than the father” (57). This chapter aims to discuss about the life style of girl children in Indian families, their wants, needs, demands, discontent and the gradual change in their mind set and life style from the early twentieth century.
They explain how women are the experts in training their children as per the demands of the society and in inculcating the needed techniques to the girls which are essential to survive after marriage. They are assigned the work of preserving the Indian Family Unit and they are committed. Hence all the problems are faced without difficulty and tackled with endurance when maturity creeps in girls as they cross their adolescence to sustain their family and children. Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari reveal how women of elder generation pretend to lose their self-identity but emerge as influential voices by being the role models for their budding comrades of forthcoming generations. The unquenchable thirst that resides inside the female self for identity and recognition in every generation makes them to permit their daughters to learn music and dance and allows the younger generation for higher education which was denied to them. The girls of modern era learn to adapt to the external and internal pressures that try to imbalance their equilibrium without losing their self-esteem. It is an inherited boon received from materfamilias, the female head of a family or household.

Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari believe that imbibing the strength to the young girls to tackle the crisis is a positive attitude and the unanimity in constructing a healthy family is a constructive approach from women which are unnoticed and disregarded for centuries. Their optimistic approach towards life by sacrificing their self and their courage to overcome the hurdles in career development are brought to limelight in the works of Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari. In the article “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness” Elaine Showalter says, “One of the great advantages of the women's-culture model is that it shows how the female tradition can be a positive source of strength and solidarity as well as a negative source of powerlessness; it can generate its own
experiences and symbols which are not simply the obverse of the male tradition” (204).
Elaine Showalter insists the importance of reading the works of women writers with a
special focus to know about the expedition and trials of women in the past and present.
Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari explain the trials and expedition of young girls in
India for more than a century and how they try hard to be liberated without disturbing the
Indian family unit. In the article entitled “Breaking that long silence” in The Hindu,
written by Aditi De, Shashi Deshpande too pleaded to view the writings of women not as
marginalised representation. “You've got to read women's writing differently. If you're
going to say this is only a story about a kitchen, and belittle it for that, that's stupid. It's
about a human being trying to place herself within relationships, people, and ideas.”

Shashi Deshpande explains the life style of girl children through her characters
Akka and Narmada who belong to the previous generation and Mini and Indu who belong
to the contemporary Indian society through Roots and Shadows and Saru in The Dark
Holds No Terrors. Sivasankari speaks about three generation of women in Pālaṅgal and
in each generation the girls are offended by the expectations of their mothers and
grandmothers and revolt. She tries to present the gradual changes that enter inside the life
of girls through Periya Pappa, Mythili, Padmini, Aparna and Bulbul who belong to
different generations. She depicts vividly the unending arguments, protests and
compromises in each generation and the slow and steady changes that are crept in to
redeem the life of women folk in Indian families. Periya Pappa, Mythili, her daughter
Padmini, Aparna and her daughter Bulbul express their dissatisfaction about the rules laid
on them by the elder generation. Their mothers convince the children by explaining the
motto of their grandmothers which is not appropriately accepted and understood. When
they become mothers, they understand their responsibility of forming a link between two
generations. Mythili and Aparna understand their grandmothers when they become
mothers in Pālaṅgal as Saru in The Dark Holds no Terrors. Shashi Deshpande and
Sivasankari like to tie themselves with the womenfolk of India through their works. In
the inaugural address at the national seminar entitled “Emerging Images of Woman in
Indian Fiction in English and in Translations from Regional Languages” at Besant
Women’s College in Mangalore which was published by Deccan Herald in the article
“Women Writings break stereotypes” Shashi Deshpande said, “To a writer, each
character is a living person to see all women in a woman is an endeavour for the author
within me.” Her statement is true and apt for both the writers.

Women are blessed with the capacity of unifying the family but they hide
themselves behind a veil. They have the capability to inject energy inside the family unit.
The characters of Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari link themselves with the family unit
and the novels Roots and Shadows, The Dark Holds No Terrors and Pālaṅgal stand as
evidence. Both the writers expect the readers to view their works as the experience of
their comrades and try to establish a link with the society. They present the slow and
steady changes that sneak inside the life of girls in India without disquieting the family
unit which is an integral part of Indian culture. The girls protest only against the rules
imposed on them and not against the Indian family unit which gives the expected solace
and the needed safety.

In Roots and Shadows Shashi Deshpande explains the expectations of the
protagonist Indu and her attempt to understand life style of Mini, Atya and others in the
joint family. In her effort Indu gains a clear perspective about life and she tries to get an awareness about the ideals of others including Akka against whom she always rebelled when she was a school girl. She is enlightened by the experiences of her life and learns to compromise when she understands the core importance of family unit in India. After marriage Indu learns that the girls are brought up to be obedient as the Indian society is conservative in its outlook about women. Men are blessed with all the privileges and women sacrifice their joy to satisfy them. Education makes her economically independent but she notices that compromises by women construct a healthy family unit which is the fundamental component of the society. Akka who restricts women of her family from speaking with boys and learning music, instructs Mini to continue her education to get married. Akka also permits changes when it is accepted as the part of life in the society and encourages Mini to go for higher education to get settled in her life. Shashi Deshpande explains how changes enter at a slow pace with the ardent support of the previous generation whenever chances are rendered.

Sivasankari is a master in portraying the characters that are very close to life. She presents a set of characters who belong to the previous generation and depicts how revolutionary ideas, modern thoughts or life style are despised by them. On the other hand she also explains how their ideas are discarded by the younger generation. The mothers in the family form a bridge between the two generations by rejecting certain requests of younger generation and permitting certain changes denying secretly the strict rules of the elder generation. In Pāḷaṅgal Sivasankari speaks about the life style of women over three generations and expresses how the changes are introduced in the life style of women in India.
While analysing Shashi Deshpande’s *Roots and Shadows, The Dark Holds No Terrors* and Sivasankari’s *Pālaṅgal*, it is quite interesting to note the nature of women and their behaviour who belong to three generations, the culture that moulds their lifestyle, the reason for their change in attitude at times and the impact of environment on them. It can be considered as a study towards better understanding of Man and Woman with their weakness who fall in the trap of societal clutches and how they are enslaved by its tradition and customs that are followed with or without a motive. During the course of such exploration it is remarkable to observe the nature of men and women which remains the same irrespective of their environment and socio-cultural background in all ages. Through their works it is clear that the family unit plays a vital role in India and it is strengthened by the optimistic and constructive approach from the elder as well as younger generations of women. Younger generation revolts to be liberated but not from the family unit.

Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari portray the experience of their comrades in the society as a girl child, wife, mother and grandmother in a family. Their key intention is to make the readers to comprehend the existing sociological bias in a patriarchal society and how girl children are tuned by their mothers, aunts and grandmothers to adjust to situation. Every generation take up the responsibility with interest and involvement as it is the founding stone for the future generation. Their involvement bears the fruit when the next generation tries their level best in inculcating their children the secrets of adapting to preserve the family unit. In India the family unit is preserved by the sacrifices of women who stand as silent victims awaiting a chance to be understood.
Women turn out to be experts in sustaining and maintaining a harmonious consanguineous family unit with ease after crossing their adolescence. It is a lesson taught and message passed to preserve the family unit from their grandmothers. In the passage of life the women in India seem to lose their individuality but they boom out as significant individuals by being archetypes for their promising forthcoming generations. Women in the family pretend to be defeated to maintain peace in the family and to provide a comfortable life to their children. At the end of their adolescence the girls understand the role of their mothers and their own parental role. In *The Second Sex* Simon de Beauvoir rightly states the motive for her passive submission as:

> The reason for this is that women lack concrete means for organising themselves into a unit which can stand face to face with the correlative unit. They have no past, no history, no religion of their own; and they have no such solidarity of work and interest as that of the proletariat. They are not even promiscuously herded together in the way that creates community feeling among the American Negroes, the ghetto Jews, the workers of Saint-Denis, or the factory hands of Renault. They live dispersed among the males, attached through residence, housework, economic condition, and social standing to certain men – fathers or husbands – more firmly than they are to other women. (18)

The life styles of girls in Indian consanguineous family unit where they learn the apt adaptation skill to be the fittest of the survival are portrayed by Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari. A comparative parallel study of their works would wide-open a new-fangled
outlook in comprehending their works from all possible angles. It is interesting to read how a little breathing space is offered in every generation to introduce a better life style for the next generation of girls without disturbing the customs followed.

Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari try to emphasis the fact that the family is a complex and dynamic institution in India. The bond that ties the individual to his or her family and in turn the range of the influence and authority that the family exercises on an individual make the family in India an institutional structure of the society. Hence the changes are advocated at a very slow pace. Girls are taught that the common interest is more important than the interest of an individual. So the behaviour of an individual is modified as per the wish of the family members. This family unit in turn cultivates tolerance, patience, respect for others, love and affection, dedication, care and sacrifice. It checks selfishness and restrains rigidity. The members of the family learn to be social. In fact, the family is the first institution that cultivates social values and social behaviour among individuals. But the girls are expected to be more submissive in rendering their duties, attending the needs of their fathers, brothers and elders. In *Roots and Shadows* Mini attends the needs of her father, brother and others even on the day of her marriage. Indu is shocked to see Mini doing her domestic works and she asks,

‘Mini! What are you doing?’
‘Taking water for Kaka’s bath.’
‘Never mind your father today. You’re a bride. You shouldn’t do any work. Put the bucket down.’ Obediently Mini let go the bucket.
‘Oh, come on, Mini,’ I called out. ‘Do what you want. Take a day off from the rules. She turned a startled face to me…

‘Mini!’ Kaka’s voice called out. ‘Where’s my bath water?’ Mini started and picking up the bucket went in. (13-14)

While describing the rich Indian rituals and the significance given to it, Sivasankari incorporates the facts about the training given to young girls to prepare them for child marriage through Sivakamu in Pālaṅgal. Sivakamu was aptly educated by her mother Pattamma before she got married at the age of seven to Suppini which helped her in the later years to do all the work in the joint family with ease. Though she grumbled once in a while comparing her work schedule with her brother, her mother chided her and taught her the skill of tackling people in the joint family. The following conversation between Sivakamu and her mother explains the dissatisfaction of the daughter and the explanation of the mother:

eṉnamma nī, dhiṉam dhiṉam vidhiyaṭathukku muṉjavē
cruppidaṟē…
tūkkam varudhu ammā
varum varum. endhirudinṭā…
kōṉdu maṭṭum thūṅgaṟānē?
avan purucap piḷḷaiḍī. (5)
(What is this mom? You wake me up before the dawn. I like to sleep.
Like to sleep after dawn? Wake up.
Kondu is still sleeping.
He is a boy.)
Sivakamu was asked to clean the cow shed before her grandfather woke up. She was then asked to mob the house twice and sweep again as per the custom followed then. She served food for her aunt who was asked to be alone during her menstrual cycle. She went to the river with a pot along with her mother Pattamma to take bath, wash the clothes and bring water for cooking. As a child she was advised to cope up with the demands of others in the family. When her grandfather taught the alphabets to the boys in the family after completing all the workload as per her mother’s instruction she too sat at one corner and tried her level best to learn. The prime focus was given for boys by their grandfather. She was insisted to learn the house hold works but not the alphabets. When she played indoor games with her sisters she was often disturbed by her mother. Pattamma sought the assistance of Sivakamu for completing all the miscellaneous works. Sivasankari narrates the tale of Sivakamu to make the readers to understand the life style of girls and work load of women from 1907 to 1931.

Sivakamu was married to Suppini at the age of seven and lived with her parent till her puberty. She went to her husband’s house at the age of thirteen which was very near to her house in the same street. She was not permitted to visit her mother’s house till delivery. She accepted the norms though she was then thirteen years old and led a peaceful life as per her mother’s anticipation. It was said that the prestige of parents depended on the girl’s commitment in their mother-in-law’s house. Sivakamu withstood all the pressures in the family as per her mother’s instruction. She obeyed without much revolt because she did not even know to rebel or dispute.
Sivakamu’s niece Periya Pappa who belonged to the next generation disputed when she was asked to take bath before entering the house from school by her grandmother. She demanded a separate bathroom. Her demands and anger surprised Sivakamu and she explained her how the younger generation was fortunate. Periya Pappa was blessed with chance of learning from school. Sivakamu tried to persuade her by telling that her grandmother’s intension was to direct them towards excellence. She was then acting as a bridge between two generations. Indu in *Roots and Shadows* recognises the intension of Akka and others in her family when she returns back to her house. Old Uncle tried to explain the role of women to Indu when she was young but in vain. In *Pālaṅgal*, Sivakamu defended the task of Periya Pappa’s grandmother when a sign of revolt budded from her but in vain. The guidance and training was given for Periya Pappa too by the women of her family but they were permitted to go to school. She compared her grandmother with the grandmother’s of her friends who were modern. Rational thinking was the gift of education. Periya Pappa’s anger, murmurs and stress were meekly understood and identified but she was counselled by Sivakamu. She was surprised and taken aback at the demands put forth by the girls who belong to the next generation.

Sivakamu did a lot of work with her mother Pattamma but her daughters and nieces were permitted to read their lessons along with miscellaneous household chores in the morning before leaving for school. While Periya Pappa’s little sister scattered the sand, she was warned by Suppu, the little girl from their house about their grandmother’s anger. She walked in a disciplined way after the warning but she was supported by Periya Pappa. “Pāṭṭi ņābagam vandhadhum maṇḍhirundha padhavicu thāṉāga vandhu oṭṭikkol|a
…oṟuṅāga naṭandḥāl” (311). (As soon as she remembers her grandmother she walks humbly as she has been instructed). The discipline was taught to them in a strict way by the elders in their family. The method may be harsh but the intention of the grandmother was to teach them their role and responsibility in their family.

Work is readily extracted from women without hesitation as males demand more involvement and participation from women in the family. Moreover women are scared of letting the family bond to disintegrate. Hence married women always obey without protest in discharging their imposed duties. They are reluctant to break the rules as collapse of the family system would result in social disintegration. Ragini Mishra, Shabnam Ansari and Sudha Mishra in their article entitled “A comparative Study of Changing Family Composition, Structure and Practices in Urban Area of Kanpur City” state, “Had the family been absent, concepts like nationalism could never originate. Traditional Asian societies have survived for thousands of years mainly because there has been a consistent emphasis on enforcing family values. Collapse of the family system simultaneously leads to social breakdown” (2).

The role of the family unit contributes a lot in shaping the character of an individual. Structurally, the Indian joint family includes three to four living generations, including grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, nieces and nephews, all living together in the same household, utilizing a common kitchen and often spending from a common income, contributed by one or many. Roots and Shadows and Pāḷaṅgal bring to light about the joint family set-up where children enjoy care and concern and girls alone encounter restrictions. The girls revolt against it as the imposed rules on them are viewed
with scornful eyes like venom. Functionally, majority of joint families adhere to a patriarchal ideology, follow the patrilineal rule of descent, and are patrilocal. Rules of conduct are aimed at creating and maintaining family harmony. The members especially women are expected to show greater readiness to cooperate with family members on decisions affecting almost all aspects of life, including career choice, mate selection, and marriage. Women are expected to accept a position subservient to males, and to subordinate their personal preferences to the needs of everyone in the family and males are expected to accept responsibility for meeting the economical needs of the family.

Both Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari portray the mind set of girls in Indian families where they are restricted from the freedom of thought, expression and growth. They depict the reason for the revolt of the girls in every generation against the rules that restrict them to act and work as per the wish of others. They try to revolt against the existing norms that curb their liberty. The idea of accepting the norms lay down becomes a big burden on their shoulders and they feel depressed. As teenagers they think that they are on the right way unlike the elders especially their grandmothers. Hence they think that their economical self-sufficiency will set them free. They try to boom out well in their career to prove their identity and self. Later they flourish as educated and career-oriented middle class women. At times they are sensitive but they know to resolve the predicament. It is a proficiency either inherited or learnt from their mothers, aunts or grandmothers.

In Roots and Shadows Indu returns back to her parental home after a gap of eleven years to meet Akka who is in her death bed. Indu recollects her disputes against
the set of laws laid down upon her by Akka, who is her grandfather’s sister. Akka orders Indu and everyone in the family to obey the rules of the family. As a girl Indu disliked not only the rules but also Akka for her conservative ideas. Whenever the rules were violated she was strictly warned. She recalls how she was scolded for serving the food by breaking the tradition when she was a school girl:

Since childhood the right method of serving food had been drilled into me. Salt here, chutney and pickles below it, vegetables on the right, dal in the centre, ghee only after serving the dal. The pattern was rigid and there could be no deviation from it. Once in a contrary mood, I had purposely changed it. The results had been catastrophic. I had fled to the old Uncle, always my refuge then and cried out, ‘Why can’t we do it any other way? Why always the same way?’ ‘Why not, Indu? There have to be some rules so that life can have both dignity and grace. We can always find measures of freedom within these rules’. (24)

Old Uncle has taught her the limit of freedom that would not affect or harm anyone. But Indu was upset and his statement failed to convince the little rebellious brain. After her return to the ancestral home Indu thinks, “I had scarcely listened then, being inured to old Uncle’s garrulity, which had, at that age, seemed meaningless. Now the words return, loaded with meaning. To fulfill one’s obligations, to discharge one’s responsibilities…can one not find freedom within this circle” (24).

Indu was warned for speaking with her classmate in the school library which was viewed by Akka with contemptuous eyes. She was advised to accept even defeat with
grace. As a girl Indu hated the statement of the elders. After her marriage with Jayant, she realises the truth in their statement:

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, they had said. It is the only way, they said, for a female to live and survive. And I…I had watched them and found it to be true. (145)

Indu’s revolt is similar to the revolt of Periya Pappa in Pālaṅgal who was twelve years old. Child marriage became an out-dated custom. She led an improved life style than her mother and aunts but she could not bear the instructions of her grandmother. Periya Pappa rebelled against her grandmother and argued that their grandmother’s prime work was to scold them from the dawn to dusk. She listed out the reason for her scolding to her siblings. She said that they were scolded for wearing long skirts that touched the ground, for combing the hair after sun set, for wearing the hair in two plaits, for coming out of their room before men folk, talking and laughing loudly and the list went on and on. She compared her house to the prison of the British. She added that the food would not get digested if her grandmother remained silent without any demands. “Veḷḷaikkāraṇ jeyilī kaidhiḍaḷa adachchu miraṭṭa la mādhiri eppap pāru oru uṟumal nammaḷaṭṭuoru peraṭṭal peraṭṭalaiṇā cappidaṛa cädham avaḷukku jiraṇaḷaṭṭu oru uṟumal nammaḷaṭṭuoru peraṭṭal” (312). (As the prisoners were threatened by the British officials the grandma threatens us or else the
food would not get digested). Her statements were approved by her little siblings Suppu and Chinna Pappa.

When they entered the house without taking bath and changing their dress, Thaila, their grandmother blamed her husband and sons who were responsible for sending them to school against her wish. The children showed their protest through their murmurs but they did not have the courage to speak it out. They took bath from the well which was at the backyard of their house. Suppu stated that their grandmother had also changed her attitude and permitted them to take bath in the well. In the beginning they were asked to take bath in the pond of their village after school hours before entering the house. Periya Pappa compared her grandmother with the grandmother of Janaki, her classmate who was modern in her thoughts, ideas and dressing.

Periya Pappa thought that her grandmother had no love or affection. She was upset and hurt when her grandmother Thaila criticised not only them but also her friend Sundari’s sister’s dress code. She said that the grandmothers of her friends Meena, Janaki and aunt of Pankajam were old but kind and soft with a smiling face unlike her grandmother Thaila. They were blamed for seeking permission to watch bioscope movies at Tanjore. So the younger generation concluded that their grandmother’s notion about life was to eat and sleep. “Idhu thappu adhu thappu…appapā … appuṟam thūṅgaṟadhum thūṅgaṟadhumthān cari” (316). (This is wrong. That is a mistake. Eating and sleeping alone is right). Sivakamu got the information from Suppu about the reason for the anger of Periya Pappa. She was surprised at the demands of the younger generation and convinced them that they worry for nothing. She compared her life when she was young
with their life style and stated that they were blessed and better privileged. She narrated how girls were not permitted to go to school and others houses and she added that they were instructed to behave as elders as soon as they got married at the age of seven. They never questioned the authority of the elders. Suppu was convinced by Sivakamu’s statement but Periya Pappa turned her face with tears.

The protests and demands from the young girls have influenced the elderly people from time to time and at times permission has been granted to fulfil their desires which turn out to be a milestone in the progress of woman in India. In a tradition bound Indian society initiating changes at once are mirages and hence changes introduced now and then with the change in time and space consciously or unconsciously. In such circumstances the anger of the grandmothers and restrictions laid on girls are with the positive motive and not to curtail the individuality of girls. Simon de Beauvoir states that it is a Universal problem by explaining the custom of Jews as, “‘Blessed be God … that He did not make me a woman,’ say the Jews in their morning prayers, while their wives pray on a note of resignation: ‘Blessed be the Lord, who created me according to His will’” (21).

When Indu disputed in Roots and Shadows, old Uncle, one of the members in her family advised, “For a woman intelligence is always a burden Indu. We like our women not to think …It’s always going to happen to you, Indu. People are afraid, resentful of brains” (40). Such statements infuriated Indu and she left home for establishing herself in her career. She studied with a motto and becomes a notable journalist. She succeeds in all her attempts. She thinks about Akka whenever she faces triumphs in her career. She
marries Jayant against Akka’s wish. The letter from Kaka about Akka’s desire to meet Indu makes her to think about returning to her ancestral house. When she reveals the news to her husband Jayant he asks, “Do you have to go? After all, she is… what is she of yours? Your father’s aunt, isn’t she? Rather a distant relation,’ Akka? A distant relation? It had sounded treacherous, disloyal. At that moment I had decided… I will go” (28).

Indu cannot consider Akka as a distant relative. Jayant’s statement about Akka makes her to think about returning back home. The experience that she has earned in her life after marriage and career is the reason for her change in attitude. Elaine Showalter in her essay “Toward a Feminist Poetics” states:

The experience of women can easily disappear, become mute, invalid, and invisible, lost in the diagrams of the structuralist or the class conflict of the Marxists. Experience is not emotion; we must protest now as in the nineteenth century against the equation of the feminine with the irrational. But we must also recognize that the questions we most need to ask go beyond those that science can answer. We must seek the repressed messages of women in history, in anthropology, in psychology, and in ourselves, before we can locate the feminine not-said, in the manner of Pierre Macherey, by probing the fissures of the female text. (39)

After returning home Indu recalls her experience with Akka, an old aunt of Indu, Narmada Atya, a widow and others in a joint family set-up. Indu says, “There are two types of people in the world. The givers and the takers. You’re a giver” (59). It is the
recognition for the affection and heed of Narmada Atya for Indu, the protagonist of the novel. Indu was taken care of by Narmada from the fifteenth day of her birth. In the article “A Journey from Ignorance to Self-Realisation”, Gomathi states, “This statement stands as a testimony for the entire women who shuns their joy, pleasure and wishes to gratify the family and they are well-versed in the art of tuning their children as competent individuals to survive in the tradition bound patriarchal society where they get only a limited space to breath” (21). At that moment Indu realises the truth in the statement of old Uncle. “The whole world is made up of interdependent parts. Why not you?” (24) At her teenage she shuns his statement and as a middle aged woman and journalist she adores his statement.

Dorothy Parker has written in her work *The Modern Women: The Lost Sex*, “I cannot be just to books which treat of woman as woman ... My idea is that all of us, men as well as women, should be regarded as human beings” (qtd. in Beauvoir 14). Indu understands that the girls are taught to be accommodative to lead a life of safety till the society pay attention to women and treat women as human beings as stated by Dorothy Parker. Breaking from the rules will confer girls neither safety nor harmony. The breach in the family would directly or indirectly affect the harmony in the society. Her longing ends when she realises the reality. In “Feminist Criticism in Wilderness” Elaine Showalter says, “…women's fiction can be read as a double-voiced discourse, containing a ‘dominant’ and a ‘muted’ story, what Gilbert and Gubar call a ‘palimpsest’”(204).

After her return to the ancestral home, Indu learns the meaning of family. She feels the warmth, tenderness and safety. Indu prefers to hear the noise from the kitchen. It
captivates her entire attention. A sense of delight is to the brim in her heart when she feels herself as a part of the family where she was brought up, scolded, trained to be obedient and she revolted against all the restrictions. She senses the familiar air:

Slowly the fragrance came to together… the sparrows with their noisy chirping, sounding like school children let out for the break; morning ablutions; the tinkle of teacups and the hiss of the primus stove; a child crying; water running into a bucket…all these forming a whole. This is our house. I am home. I had stayed away ten years from this house. And yet, each day of these ten years, I woke up to the same sounds. For a few seconds of each day, I was back in this house. But this time it was real. (40)

The family has been and continues to be one of the most important elements in the fabric of Indian society. The family is the place where the impact of what is happening in Indian society is seen. When young people live with the senior members of the family from the time they are born, they grow up not only being appreciated, admired and loved but also advised, instructed and taught to be a part of the family by following its norms without violating its codes. They struggle to adjust as they have less flexibility. The elder people who follow the conventions like to retain them without being disturbed or altered at any cost. Members of the family shower enormous respect on the elders. In a joint family a child learns to be accommodative as it is reared by a number of people. Unconsciously they learn the knack of dividing work, saving time and creating a spectrum of exposure and awareness.
As an adult Indu is not affected by Akka’s curious questions about Jayant and she listens to her patiently. Akka says, “You think that what you do is no concern of ours, do you Indu? You think your life is none of my business?” (28) Her gentleness disarms Indu as she has seen Akka only as a dictator and ruler of everyone’s mind and behaviour in the family. Her concern touches Indu’s heart and she is silenced. Akka’s fury and hostility transformed Indu into a rebellious individual when she was young. In her stay in the family she sees everyone accepts Jayant as their kith and kin. It soothes her heart and she feels at home. “Everyone referring to him as ‘our son-in-law’ or ‘our brother-in-law’…But there was, I knew no falseness about the words. A person belonged to the family. Your brother’s daughter yours, his son-in-law yours as well. This I could understand” (60). Indu sees the active participation of all the members in the family in the funeral rites of Akka. “And there was one moment of perception when I felt like Akka herself, seeing the family as an entity beautiful and living. It is one of those memories that will stay with me all my life” (61).

The funeral rites and the worshiping of ancestors are still a part of the functions of joint family system. This reinforces in the minds of younger generation with the respect and love for the elders. Indu feels pity for the children reared from the nuclear family unit where children lack the care of aunts, uncles and grandmothers. She thinks: “I think of my own childhood and of how I got affection from Atya; and I know why there is a faint tinge of pity in me for the small families of today. Father, mother, child…” (23). Today, the Indian family is subjected to changes due to the economic, political, social and cultural spheres of the society. With the advent of urbanisation and modernisation, younger generations are turning away from the joint family form. One of the most
striking features of contemporary societies is the presence of a range of family variations, from the most traditional, extended families with strict, gender based sex roles to the modern dual career families. Nandan and Eames in their article “Topology and Analysis of the Asian-Indian Family” state:

Families in India are tied up with unseen bond, cooperation, harmony and interdependence. Togetherness is what rules over here. There has been a long standing tradition in the Indian culture to live in extended families. The joint family has always been the preferred family type in the Indian culture, and most Indians at some point in their lives have participated in joint family living. (46)

Shashi Deshpande through Indu states that people in joint families learn lessons of patience, tolerance, cooperation and adjustment. Sivasankari shows how the mothers in the family balance between the younger and the older generation. The family supports the old; takes care of widows, never-married adults, and the disabled; assists during periods of unemployment and provides security and a sense of support and togetherness. They are also trained to take collective responsibility. More specifically, collectivism is reflected in the readiness to cooperate with family members and extended kin on decisions affecting most aspects of life, including career option and marriage. The Indian family is considered as a strong, stable, close, resilient, and enduring unit.

Shashi Deshpande likes to state not only the advantage of joint family but also the flaws which influence girls where they are silenced through the family of Indu which lies under the control of Akka in Roots and Shadows. Narmada Atya, old Uncle and his
grandson Naren are sheltered in the joint family including Indu who says, “I had been a fifteen-days-old motherless infant when I had been brought into this house” (93).

Indu lives in the nuclear family but supports joint family. This is a changing scenario in the Indian society which is accepted by majority of working class people. The working environment forces the people to think optimistically about nuclear family where the children are not introduced to the care and concern of the elders. Indu was worried about the tradition and patriarchy and tries to break away to establish individuality when she was young. But after her return she understands the comfort of a joint family:

The enchantment of waking up in the morning to various sounds that somehow formed a harmonious whole. Birds chirping in the windows. A child crying. The Primus stove hissing. The tinkle of cups and saucers. Akka singing. And then, the magic of the evening hours, when the first lamp was lit for the gods. The lights gently twinkling in all the rooms. Women sitting at ease for the first time in the day, stretching out their legs in front of them. Story-telling time...children lying with heads pillowed on warm laps, listening with a drowsy intentness, when the whole didn’t matter, but each word was significant and meaningful. Men returning home, shedding their slippers, washing their feet, and settling down with large contented sighs. The feeling of ease, contentment and indolence embracing the whole house. And the huge front door, which no child could ever push the whole way, standing wide open the whole day, so that people just walked in and became part of the family. An aura of warmth
that didn’t have to be said in words, smiles, dinners and drinks. This was home. Where one lived. Not stayed. (93)

Indu compares her life style with the life of the people in the ancestral house. When Indu was young she hated the autocracy of Akka and she wanted to escape from her stringent words. She thought of leading a carefree life without being interfered or commanded. When she left home she had sworn she would never return back. She was childishly crude with technicoloured dreams of revenge against Akka. Her compromises with Jayant in her marital life and his odd behaviour upset Indu. After her return she recollects her stay, her revolts and enjoys her present stay. She likes to stay there and thinks, “But there’s a difference between eighteen and twenty-nine…” (27)

Shashi Deshapande provides Indu a chance to discuss with Narmada about the early life of Akka and Narmada. She thinks and discusses about Mini’s lifestyle and her marriage. Akka is a nightmare for everyone in the house. She is the youngest sister of Indu’s grandfather. She returned as a rich widow after her husband’s death. She has never permitted anyone to peep into her personal life. Indu recalls how Akka refused to sanction permission to Naren’s mother to learn music when Indu was young. She refuses to get admitted in hospitals even in her last phase of life fearing that the people in the hospital may belong to other castes. Her attitude and temperament has not been changed much. Indu is surprised at her stubbornness.

Narmada narrates about Akka’s distressing and miserable life to Indu. Akka was twelve years old when she got married to a man who was more than thirty years old. Akka was sexually assaulted by her husband. As a child she could not endure the tortures
she tried to run away from her mother-in-laws house at the age of thirteen. She was whipped and locked up in a cell for three days. She suffered a lot by the cynical behaviour of her husband who had an illegal affair and mother-in-law who blindly punished her. But she emerged as a strong self when her husband fell ill and she denied him the permission to see the lady with whom he had lived. She expected the same fate when Narmada got married at a very young age to a man who was mentally abnormal. Both Akka and Narmada were forced to marry as per the choice of the elders. Indu compares her marriage with their child marriages.

Sivasankari narrates the life style of girls from 1940 to 1964 through Mythili, and her daughter Padmini. The combat zone between Mythili and her grandmother Anandam upset Rajam. The standing orders of Anandam created a gap between the two generations. Mythili was annoyed when she was advised against biting her nails, making two plaits, wearing long skirts that touched the ground, visiting her friend after sunset and listening to music with the help of gramophone. “Nagaththai kaṭikkādē. Iraṭṭaip piṇṇalai avaru-cagikkalai.Pāvāḍaiai peraḷak kaṭṭādē thūkkūḍī enṭna muṟaikkirē” (28). (Don’t bite your nails. Untie the two plaits. It is not nice. Don’t wear you skirts till your heels. Don’t stir at me and do what I say.) Mythili was constantly instructed by her grandmother at least ten times a day. She never raised her voice against her grandmother but murmured and grumbled to show her protest. She used to sob after losing her patience. She was always convinced by Rajam, her mother. She tried to explain the right intension of her grandmother but Mythili was not ready to accept. She asked her mother to be obedient to her mother-in-law, Anandam. Though Rajam liked to support her daughter now and then she was also not sanctioned the rights. Girls were sent to convents for education and short
gowns were worn by them. Rajam observed the changes in the society and responded to
the changes. She permitted changes and supported Mythili whenever it was possible with
her husband’s support.

Mythili liked to learn classical dance like her neighbour Lalitha but her
grandmother called it as the profession of prostitutes as Akka refused the grant
permission to Naren’s mother to learn music in *Roots and Shadows*. When she secretly
sought the permission from her father Sundaram, she was severely warned. Mythili did
not permit her mother to celebrate her puberty which was viewed as a violation from
rules of their tradition by her grandmother. But with the support of her father she stopped
the ceremony. Anandam was forced to accept the changes in the society. She refused to
permit her granddaughter to go to school after her puberty but Mythili’s father Sundaram
explained the changes in the society and convinced her. “*Kālam māṟiḻuthu athai
puṟiṉjurukkō nī*” (38). (Gradually changes are introduced and try to understand.) Mythili’s
mother supported Anandam, her mother-in-law when Sundaram delayed the marriage of
her daughter. Anandam shouted that she got married at the age of six and Rajam at
twelve. Rajam who supported and fulfilled the wishes of her daughter secretly was scared
when her daughter’s marriage was delayed. Mythili was compelled to learn music with
the help of a music teacher in the presence of the grandmother. As it was a custom to sing
a song before the bridegroom she was given the permission. Mythili disliked all the
suggestions given by her grandmother.

Mythili was punished harshly by her grandmother if she returned home late either
from school or her friend’s house. She had to take fifty sit-ups in the pooja room. Mythili
was served only rice and butter milk for keeping the wet towel on the paddy bag when all the other members were served delicious food. She was warned for using inner wear and trimming her hair. Mythili could not expect modern thoughts from an old-fashioned woman who was brought up in a traditional way. She refused to return to her mother’s house after her baby was aborted fearing the abuse of her grandmother.

The history repeats when the cold war brooms between Mythili’s teenage daughter Padmini and her mother-in-law Mangalam. But she remembers the words of her grandmother Anandam whenever an argument buds between her daughter Padmini and her mother-in-law. When her daughter enters the house with shoes, Mangalam flares up in anger. One minute she would rave and rant, the next she would exude love and affection. Mythili is forced to take up the role of a mediator in between two generations and recollects her childhood fury against her grandmother Mangalam. Mangalam could never bear to see anyone unhappy or hungry. If she found someone in need, she would give away whatever she had. Mythili remembers how her grandmother cried and worried when her baby had been aborted. She thinks that these women have kind hearts behind the mask of sternness.

Anandam worries when the traditional sweets are discarded by the younger generation during festival times. She objects for waking late on Diwali festival, for going to films instead of spending the day with the blessings of the elders and her list is endless. Padmini forces her parents to send her to Delhi NCC parade and she considers it as a golden opportunity in her life. Her parents conceal her puberty from her grandmother and send her for the parade. Gradual changes are permitted when situation demands
consciously or unconsciously in every generation. Sivakamu viewed Periya Pappa’s revolt with surprise as Rajam viewed Mythili’s. But Mythili understands her role better than Sivakamu and Rajam as she was once the angry rebel against her grandmother,

Anandam worried when her granddaughter Mythili’s marriage was delayed. She got married at the age of six and Rajam, Mythili’s mother at the age of twelve. Child marriage system was gradually abolished from Indian culture. Awareness has been created in the society about the importance of educating girls by Prarthana Samaj founded by Dr.Atmaram Pandurang, Arya Samaj by Swami Dayananda Saraswathi, Aligarh Movement by Sir. Syed Ahamed Khan and Self Respect Movement by E.V.Ramasamy.

Love marriages without or with the consent of the elders are gradually introduced. Indu marries Jayant without the consent of Akka or the elders in the family. Though the choice is hers she is not completely satisfied with Jayant’s behaviour at times though she loves him, adores him and likes his presence. She understands that the girls are taught to be submissive only with a good will to survive in the society where they are given limited scope. The problem is not with the elders but with the way of living in the Indian families where girls are preferred less. Elaine Showalter in her article “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness” states:

The child develops core gender identity concomitantly with differentiation, but the process is not the same for boys and girls. A boy must learn his gender identity negatively as being not-female, and this difference requires continual reinforcement. In contrast, a girl's core
gender identity is positive and built upon sameness, continuity, and identification with the mother. (196)

Akka and Narmada got married when they were children but Indu departed from the family to continue her education. Such a liberty for girls in Indian society is unique which has helped her to establish well in her career. She compares her life with others in the family. Indu realises that there was no one to counsel or support either Akka or Narmada at the time of their marriage. At the same time she understands the plight of Mini, the daughter of Indu’s uncle and she speaks for Mini with her father and elders in the family. Uncles of Padmini support the choice of the bridegroom and try to convince Indu:

Mini’s marriage…that’s settled, is it? You’re all agreed that Mini should marry that man?’

‘Why not?’ Vinayak-kaka gave me an owlish look through his glasses.

‘Yes, why not? The perfect couple. So say the horoscopes.’

‘No.’ It was Madhav-kaka. ‘Not perfect. But what couple could be perfectly matched? Tell me Indu…you chose your own husband. Are you a made-for-each-other couple? He enunciated the words as if making a burlesque of them, making them sound what they were …ridiculous…

‘You people…you’ve thought of everything… the families, the communities, the stars, the gotras, everything…’

‘Yes, is that wrong, Indu? Madhav-kaka interrupted me. “Marriage itself a difficult enough business. For two people to merge into one identity,
it’s…almost an impossibility. But given certain things in common…
language, customs, rituals, background… all this makes it easier.’

‘2+2 makes 4’

‘Yes, 2+2 does make 4. I don’t know why you intellectuals,’ he smiled
and I thought… I wouldn’t like to be his subordinate, ‘dismay that
equation.’

They were all watching us as if it was a duel.

‘Oh, that equation is fine for Maths. But not for humans, Madhav-kaka.
You’re leaving out that great incalculable…human emotions.’ (94-95)

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Indu fails in her attempt but she tries her level best to explain Mini about married
life. She explains that the life after marriage is based on the involvement and
commitment of two individuals. “But Mini… marriage is… It means living with a man.
You have to listen to him, endure his habits, his smell, his touch, his likes, his dislikes.
You have to sleep with him, bear him children. Can you do all that with this man?” (137)

Talking or discussing about marriage or life after marriage is a rare thing and Indu’s
approach is viewed with a surprise by Mini. Mini has been trained to help the women
with small odd chores from her childhood. She is trained to attend her father and
brothers. She remains passive and submissive unlike Indu. Indu’s world is totally
different. She likes herself to be independent and liberated. She has worked hard, studied
well and shines as a journalist.

In the case of Akka and Narmada there was none to offer them an idea about life
after marriage. An apt counselling is given by Indu at the pertinent point of time to Mini.
Indu confidently guides Mini. This confidence is a boon to educated women. This
privilege is enjoyed by only a selected few who are economically independent. Mini studies as Akka instructed her to study. Akka though belong to the old generation understands the value of education and motivates Mini to pursue her studies. Changes are accepted even by the elders with warmth now and then. Mini says, “Of course I’m marrying him because there’s nothing else I can do. 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” (118). Indu discusses with Mini about the disadvantage of leading a monotonous life and its impact on an individual:

‘Do you know, Mini,’ I said after a brief silence, ‘that there are some workers in industries who spend a whole working-life doing the same small bit of work over and over again? Just that and nothing else. Imagine you’re a worker in a car factory. Your job is drilling some holes in a metal sheet. And you do just that and nothing else all your life. You don’t even get to see the car of which your sheet is a part. How do you think you’d feel when you were dying and trying to sum up your life?’ (117)

Mini listens to the advices of Indu with patience and she then explains the reason for accepting the bridegroom. Mini is past twenty-four and she has to get married. Child marriages are prohibited but at present girls live with the expectation of getting married. Mini says that she is not given a choice in a traditional society where marriage of a girl is fixed by the elders. It is decided on the financial condition of the girl’s father, her economical status, horoscope, etc. Mini pathetically asks Indu, “What choice do I have Indu?” (116) Shashi Deshpande thinks that the above question has been asked by millions of girls millions of times in this country. Though it has to be stopped, the solution for the
problem is not within the reachable limits. Indu thinks, “… years of blind-folding can obscure your vision so that you 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”(116-117).

In India girls are told that they have to go to ‘their home’ by the parents and the members of the family. They are taught that they belong to the family where they would live after marriage. At first they do not understand the literal meaning of such statements. Later they realise that they are alienated from their parent’s home. Their nomadic life agitates them and finally turns them as rebellious individuals. When they are told that their parent’s home is not their home they develop a sense of alienation. Boys feel a sense of belonging in the family which is not granted for girls. Mini consoles Indu, “There’s one thing I’m really good at…looking after the house. And to get a home, I have to get married. This is not my home, is it?” (118) When the girls are advised, they revolt as adolescents and later they understand the underlying truth in the statement and adapt. Mini says, ‘You know it isn’t. Ever since we were small, we were told…. ‘You’ll be going away one day to your own home.’ They said it to you and me, never to Hemant or Sumant or Sharad or Sunil” (117).

Mini seems to be meek and docile. But she understands the situation clearly and accepts whatever is bestowed on her with a smile. Mini enters into the marriage institution with the hope that her husband would take care of her. The family unit in India moulds her to accept a husband with his negatives. In a patriarchal society women have no whip in their hand except accepting what is destined for them. “Oh, I don’t know. And I don’t care. He’ll look after me. And no one can say to me, ‘How old are you? And not married
yet! What a pity!’ I’m tired, Indu. I don’t care what kind of a man he is. Once we are married, and he becomes my husband, none of his flaws will matter” (118).

Arranged marriages have been an integral part of the Indian society since ages. Basically a marriage is termed as arranged when it is arranged by people other than those getting married. In the process, it strictly curtails the phenomena of courtship. Parents, relatives, match making agents, matrimonial sites or a trusted third party play a crucial role in arranging the marriage. In fact the task of match making is quite a number of times carried out by astrologers, religious leaders, trusted relatives, family friends, etc. In older times, the bride and the groom were neither asked for their consent, nor informed about their life partner. But at present in most of the cases the financial status of the bride’s father prevents him from asking the consent of his daughter. The process begins with practices like matching the horoscope of the couple for checking the compatibility, the background of the families and their castes. The marriage ceremony is highly formal in case of an arranged marriage, with the groom's family playing to the gallery. The marriage is conducted in strict accordance with the Vedic rites and rituals. After marriage the bride bids farewell amidst blessings for her prosperous marital life. In India arranged marriages are preferred because the expectations of the brides are less.

Indu learns the truth in Mini’s statement. When two individuals are united in the name of marriage either arranged or love marriage both should learn to adjust to the tastes of the other. Indu realises that family unit is more important than an individual. Mini stands as a strong and powerful woman in thinking constructively to build a family of her own and she, with a prepared mind is ready then to accept the flaws with ease.
Indu stands as a weak individual before Mini as she seeks refuge under Naren and he exploits her weakness.

The act of adultery is a crime which breaches the marriage vows and is detrimental to public morals. Even Indu herself abominates her marital infidelity and vows to live with Jayant without revealing her relationship with Naren. Restrictions and economical independence should not mislead women to commit sin. In any society marital infidelity is loathed and laws have been passed to maintain and preserve the sanctity of marriage. All religions generally disapprove adultery and consider it a major sin. It is high time that women should not be prohibited from her rights.

Shashi Deshpande worries that such a position should not mislead women. Society ought to assign a contented place for girls to lead a relaxed and optimistic life. In such a place girls would hate even to think about adultery. Constructive improvement in the economical and social life is the exact anticipation of millions in India. Indu is economically independent but she yearns for self-expression. She is a successful journalist but she pathetically fails in articulating her desires to her husband. It misleads Indu. Shashi Deshpande willingly removes Naren from the novel. The following questions linger in the minds of readers even after completed reading for a long time. What would be the decision of Indu, if Naren is not drowned? Can it then be concluded as Indu has missed the lessons taught by the elders?

Indu understands the meaning in the statement of her husband Jayant about Mini’s strength. “They have an inner strength we know very little of” (17). Mini understands the concept behind every restriction imposed on her and other girl children. Such restrictions
are not to limit them from their liberty but to fine tune them to adapt to the society.

Mostly grandmothers and the aged ladies in the house take the roles of Males and train them as the capable individuals which would be understood by them at the right juncture. Even the elderly ladies have no option except correcting the behaviour of the younger generation as per the expectation of the society. They know that the changes cannot happen in a day.

Akka who restricted Indu from speaking with boys and viewed Indu’s marriage with Jayant with scornful eyes makes Indu as her heir. Old Uncle’s grandson Naren tells Indu, “You know how fanatically loyal she was to her own community” (22). Though Indu stays away from the family for a while, she is magnetised again into the concept of family. “Families! And yet, since coming for the wedding, I have seen the concept of the family taking shape, living, in front of my eyes” (15-16). Indu helps her uncles, nephews and niece to settle in their career including Mini and she does not like to take the entire benefit from the property of Akka. Shashi Deshpande feels that the change should emerge from the society to treat both the genders equally.

In *Roots and Shadows* Indu appears to be liberated, but seems to bend to the dictates of others in the family after her return. She understands the place of girls in the society and the need to preserve the family unit which is the spring from where inestimable healthy buds sprout out to spread fragrance. The healthy family unit imparts work ethics, discipline and a set of principles that will give them the edge for their studies and carrier. The care and concern showered on them equip them with the needed thrust to meet the challenges of life with ease. Constant counselling and exclusive focus at the apt
time give accessibility to solve the problems of life with confidence. Healthy and well-defined families give rise to a constructive society. In the interview with S. Prasans Sree, Shashi Deshpande declared:

Is it not human-you were a rebellious teenager and you dislike what your elders tell you…at the age of thirty are you going to be the same rebellious teenager? This is totally a wrong understanding of liberation. Liberation does not mean casting your humanity. You are still a human being but you are struggling to understand that you are not going to be shackled by certain things, you know. Certain things are unavoidable. You are a human being. You are living in this society. You are tied to so many other human beings. Certain compromises have to be made, certain responsibilities have to be taken up and certain duties are to be undertaken. Liberation doesn’t mean that you run away from all these responsibilities… this is totally a wrong understanding of liberation. Indu who goes back is a woman who is much older than the teenager who rebelled against Akka. There is a world of differences between what I felt for your parents when you were fourteen and what you felt for them when you were thirty-five. (90)

In Pālaṅgal, Mythili gets the awareness when she tries to solve the disputes between her daughter and her grandmother Mangalam. When girls cross their adolescence they get the maturity and analyse their problems laterally. Their logical analysis wide opens an insight and they find a way to travel through the intricate passages
of life without difficulty by preserving their identity in the society without disintegrating
the family unit. A well-established dynamic family unit is fabricated by them and it is
built on their selfless services and sacrifices. The little rebels make the elders in the
family to unlock the bonds that restrict them consciously or unconsciously and gradually
fresh air enters inside the life of millions of their comrades. Sivasankari and Shashi
Deshpande are of the view that the children of early twentieth century are comparatively
strong with a firm will power and withstanding ability. Their efforts bear the fruit in the
later part of twentieth century and hence thirty three percent job reservation is accessible
for women in all state government jobs in India.

*The Dark Holds No Terrors* describes a girl’s struggle to fit herself in her family
where she was not the centre of attraction. Saru after her return to her father’s house
sadly recollects her gloomy childhood days. Saru recalls how she was neglected in the
family by her mother. The negligence in the family distracted little Saru and she became
a rebel. As a young girl Saru protested whenever preference was given more for her
brother Dhruva. She felt that she was treated as an alien in the family and thought that
she was a prey of her mother’s gender-based bias. She desperately expected the care and
love from her father and mother, but it became ineffective. She wanted to hide herself to
make her mother to search for her became a failure and in her attempt Dhruva died. Saru
was blamed for her brother Dhruva’s death. Saru’s mother was unable to comprehend the
expectation of Saru. After her brother’s unexpected sad demise, she was cursed and
blamed by her mother. “Why you are still alive…? Why didn’t you die…? (35) Saru told
herself always, “No, I couldn’t. I had to work hard, to be a success, to show them . . . her
. . . something. What? I didn’t know. But I had to make myself secure so that no one
would ever say to me again . . . why are you alive?” (50). She too had lost her only companion and expected the supporting and consoling words of her mother. On the other side Saru’s mother lost all her hopes in life after the sudden demise of her son and forgot to scrutinise the psyche of little Saru.

In most of the Indian families a huge gap between mother and girl children exists. No one takes the initiate to resolve the crisis. So the gap grows and it causes calamity in the life of many including Saru. Her struggle to catch the attention of her father was an evidence for her isolation in the family. Saru’s mother deemed her son Dhruva as an asset and Saru as a burden. She was brought up with the view that she should be sent soon from the family after marriage. Her attitude instilled a sense of insecurity in Saru’s young mind.

The economical insecurity makes a woman to depend on father before marriage, husband after marriage and son in their old age. Girls are often degraded and dishonoured by other women in any patriarchal society. Simon de Beauvoir states the reason as, “When a man views a woman as the Other, he may then expect her to accept because she is often very well pleased with her role as the Other” (20). Saru’s father used to take Dhruva for a ride but not Saru. Saru’s mother performed a puja to rejuvenate the birthday of her son. “There was always a puja on Dhruva”s birthday. A festive lunch in the afternoon and an aarti in the evening during which Dhruva, as an infant, sat solemnly on Baba”s lap, and as a child, by his side, cap on head, fatuous smile on face, while I helped my mother to do the aarti” (168). He was given the top preference and the religious rituals related with him were celebrated as a pompous show. Saru’s birthday was hardly acknowledged. “My birthdays were almost the same . . . a festive lunch, with whatever I
asked for, an aarti in the evening; but there was no puja” (169). Charu Chandra Mishra is of the view, “It seems, at first, that against the patriarchal power of domination, her relationship with Dhruva forms the battle ground on which she is fighting for a space of her own” (97).

Saru’s mother stopped all the celebrations after the death of her son and Saru’s birthday went off in silence without being noticed. She concluded that all matter related to Saru was considered only as a displeasure in the family. She gradually alienated herself and focused her attention in studies to get good scores. She thought that all her dreams could be fulfilled through her profession. In the article, “Mother-Daughter Relationship in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande” Rashmi Sahi observes, “When a mother differentiates between her own children the boy and the girl for whom she has equally suffered and taken equal pains, there is no other torch bearer than for the girl child” (20-21).

Even dress code for Saru was taught in a crude way and she was instructed not to appear with her petticoat. Her mother added that she had to be ashamed at herself even in the presence of her father. Her mother said, “You should be careful now about how you behave. Don’t come out in your petticoat like that. Not even when it’s only your father who’s around” (62). Imtiaz Dharkar too painfully expresses the plight of a girl in the Islam community in her poem Purdah as

One day they said
she was old enough to learn some shame.
She found it came quiet naturally.
Purdah is a kind of safety.
The body finds a place to hide.

The cloth fans out against the skin

Much like the earth that falls

On coffins after they put dead men. (1-8)

When Saru was playing outside her house her mother scolded her for spoiling her skin texture. Saru revolted and compared herself with Dhruva. She was given the idea from her childhood that girls should protect and maintain themselves well till they get married. She added that such rules were not applicable for boys. Her words hurt Saru.

Don't go out in the sun. You'll get even dark.

Who cares?

We have to care 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?

You can't

And Dhruva?

He's different. He's a boy. (45)

Girls in Indian families are viewed as the migrants who have to shift their roots as soon as they get married. As a result the little girl Saru came to the conclusion that her womanhood was a curse on her and regretted badly for her puberty. She was given a straw mat to sleep on and was served from a distance. She thought that she was designated the status of a marginalised and isolated self and she felt “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” (62). The exile from her regular activities causes a deep sense of distress in Saru’s mind. During ancient days a lot of work load was imposed on women and to offer them some rest they were isolated. The same custom adapted was unconvincing and Saru’s agony was indefinable and inexpressible. The communication gap between Saru and her mother became unbridgeable. During one of her arguments with her mother she stated, “… if you are women, I don't want to be one” (63). It is a tradition in India to isolate girls during menstrual cycle. They are not permitted inside the house for five days. In the beginning of twentieth century women were loaded with a lot of work and to offer them rest such practices were followed. Sivakamu’s mother Pattamma and the ladies of their era woke up at three in the morning. They had to extract oil from sesame seeds for cooking, fetch water from river, maintain cows for milk and all the functions including marriages were arranged in the houses. The traditional way of performing the rituals extracted all the energy of women and they were given rest during their menstrual cycle every month. When the same is followed in the later part of twentieth century as well girls started agitating. In Pālaṅgal, Mythili protested against the puberty function and her daughter Padmini gets permission for NCC parade at Delhi.

Saru’s mother always worried about the dark complexion of Saru. This creates an inferiority complex in Saru. Her mother’s words made Saru to think, “I was an ugly girl. At least, my mother told me so. I can remember her eyeing me dispassionately, saying . . . You will never be good looking. You are too dark for that” (61). Her fears about her body vanish off after studying Anatomy and Physiology in her first year Medicine Course.
After her good scores in her Higher Secondary Examination she felt happy and discussed about her career choice with her father. Her father asked her whether she liked to select B.Sc. Saru denied her father’s choice and expressed her wish to join in Medicine. She was not given a chance to express her views or thoughts in the family. When she liked to study Medicine there was an unexpected response from her mother. Her mother who belongs to the orthodox Indian Brahmin family expected her daughter to get married at the earliest. When Saru’s mother wanted to settle Saru in family life, her ideas were disputed by Saru. Her mother said, “And don't forget, medicine or no medicine, doctor or no doctor, You still have to get married, spend money on her wedding. Her mother asks to her father, She suggests that; ‘Let her go for a B.Sc. You can get her married in two years and our responsibility will be over’” (44). Her answer expresses the pathetic plight of girls in Indian society. Her attitude towards Saru is not her own. The mothers are tuned by the society. She has been brought up and living in the society where marriages are fixed based on money and not on career or talent of a girl.

Mini in *Roots and Shadows* and Mythili and Charu in *Pālaṅgal* encounter the same problem when the marriage is fixed. Their marriages are decided based on dowry. As a little girl Saru failed to understand the pressure given for parents of girls in Indian society whereas her mother knew the crisis. But she did not know to express the difficulty of parents to Saru through the right choice of words. Her crude words hurt Saru. She thought that her mother loved only her brother and not Saru. Mary Wollstonecraft in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* states, “To be a good mother—a woman must have sense, and that independence of mind which few women possess who are taught to depend entirely on their husbands. Meek wives are, in general, foolish mothers;
wanting their children to love them best, and take their part, in secret, against the father, who is held up as a scarecrow” (155). Parents often love their children in the most brutal manner though they sacrifice every relative duty to promote their advancement in the world. To settle them in life, they forget their present existence and they behave harshly leaving permanent scars in the psyche of their children.

The society turns blind and deaf to the demands of women. The preference given to boys upsets girls when they are young. They try to establish their identity through education, self-development and career. Saru’s childhood experiences infuse a great thriving force to come out of her marital crisis with an optimistic mind set. She learns to think in a balanced way and finds solution to her problems without escaping from the problems. D. G.Thakor rightly observes,

Our society is full of paradoxes and contradictions. Here a female is considered a peripheral member of the family, both in her parent's house as well as husbands. Throughout her lifetime, she is unable to decide her roots and this leads to her insecurity. As the daughter is closest to the mother, this insecurity is rubbed on to her also. Saritha in confronts reality and, at the end, realizes that the dark no longer holds any terrors to her. She empowers herself to be survive in a male dominated world that offers no easy outs to women. She neither surrenders to nor does escape from the problems but with great strength accept the challenges to face them strongly. (4)
It is high time that Indian mothers should understand the emotions of girls and they should explain their daughters about the intricacies of life rather than dictating them. Nancy Chodorow in her article entitled “Family Structure and Feminine Personality.” states, “In so far as aspects of the maternal relationship are unsatisfactory, or such that the infant feels rejected or unloved, it is likely to define itself as rejected, or as someone who drives love away” (78). The words of her mother make Saru to feel inferior and she states candidly after meeting Manu, “I thought no male would take that kind of an interest in me. Yet, there was one” (91). Saru always feels insecure and uncertain about herself. When she discloses her relationship with Manu, her mother asks:

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

In this situation Saru’s mother is not to be blamed. Saru is a typical representative of millions of women in India. The institution of patriarchy and the wrong or biased conditioning of the daughter are to be blamed. Saru’s grandmother was deserted by her husband, leaving her behind with two little daughters, one being her own mother. It was said that her grandfather had opted for Sanyas, a total renunciation of the material world like Gopal in A Matter of Time. It was easy for men folk to escape from duties in the name of sanyasas. It was, however, her grandmother’s father who then looked after them
and got the girls married. “But there had been, obviously, the burden of being unwanted, of being a dependent. Yet her grandmother had never, so she had heard, complained. It’s my luck, she said. My fate. It was written on my forehead.” (70). She resembles Kalyani in *A Matter of Time*. Women without a question take care of family and children.

The conflict between grandmother and granddaughters in every generation in *Pālaṅgal* resembles the conflict between Saru and her mother. Such conflicts have motivated the girls to thrive well in studies. It has wide-opened the magic gates of career opportunities and entrepreneurship. Saru, Indu, Mythili and Aparna bridge the communication gap that has existed and this paves the way for the empowerment of women at slow pace.

Saru tries to understand her son and daughter unlike her mother. She does not show any disparity between them. Even then in childish anguish Renu blames Saru for supporting her brother Abhi. She refuses to share her birthday gifts with her brother and scolds Saru for referring the boy as her little sibling. Saru wants to maintain a balanced relationship between her daughter and herself. But the attitude of her daughter threatens Saru and she understands the difficulty of being a mother. She longs to fulfil their wishes unlike her parents. A gradual change in the mindset of educated women is seen through the attitude of Saru towards her children. She fears, “Will Renu turn mocking eyes on me one day? Will Abhi defy me? Will they betray me as I betrayed her?” (139)

At times Saru finds in herself the image and influence of her mother. “The gestures, the actions, the very words that accompanied them were, though she did not realize it, her mother’s. As if she was unconsciously, unknown to herself, mimicking the
mother she had never admired, never endeavoured to imitate” (106). Thus in spite of her conscious effort to stay off from her mother, Saru at times identifies herself taking the task and responsibility of her mother. In this context Judith Kegan Gardiner comments, “Without a firm individual identity, mother or daughter may react to the other’s self, body, habits, or life-style as though they were her own” (148).

Saru’s mother was not ready to accept Saru and she asked her father not to disclose her disease or pain to her daughter. Saru has not made an attempt to meet her and her mother too never offers her a chance. But Saru cares for her daughter and her feelings. Saru describes, “She stares at me critically at times, a cold, shrewd, objective observer behind those little girl’s eyes of hers. And I become nervous, unsure, uncertain of myself” (33). Though she does not know how to bring her daughter under her care and love, she wants to resolve the gap between them. It is again a positive approach towards girl children. Saru does not want to disclose her personal life with her daughter and she wants to balance her roles as a wife and mother. Sometimes, it gives the impression that the barrenness and monotony of her own life is upsetting her daughter’s life too. Renu reflects her own mother’s childhood image. Saru worries, “She does not talk much. She reminds me of a room whose doors are closed. Nothing emerges, neither joys nor her sorrows. And I sense a lack of feeling, of sensitivity in her” (33). Young Saru’s indifference was neither noticed nor taken care of by their parent. But on the other hand Saru worries about her daughter’s condition in spite of her personal sorrows and hectic work schedule.
The painting of her daughter is closely observed and analysed by Saru. When Renu draws thick forest covered by darkness, Saru fears that it is a kind of manifestation of her inner self. She doubts, “And yet she knew how often Renu reminded her of her mother. Her quiet watchfulness. The feeling she gave you of being weighed up, criticized, possibly rejected” (34). Saru wants to be a loving and caring mother and she is uncertain about her care towards her children especially Renu. She decides to shower her love on Renu which she had expected from her mother in vain. She wants herself not to be blamed by her children. She is sure that the childhood memories would be with her daughter Renu till the end of life and she knows for sure that she is the victim of her uncared mother. Saru wishes to be a mother as illustrated by Simone de Beauvoir in her *The Second Sex* “…sufficiently satisfied with life to desire reincarnation in a daughter or at least to accept a daughter without disappointment; they will want to give the child the opportunities they have had and also those they have missed” (533).

Saru confesses her father, “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). Her perception of life has changed completely and she begins to conceive life from a traditional woman’s point of view. Saru thinks, “It’s my fault again. If mine had been an arrange marriage, if I had left it to them to arrange my life, would he have left me like this?” (218). The difficulty of motherhood in a tradition bound patriarchal society is understood by Saru when she takes up the role of a mother to her children. She is compelled to be a mother and wife at home and doctor at hospital. The work stress and her relationship with her husband prevent her from being neutral. When Saru puts her feet into her mother’s shoes, then she realises what it is to be a
mother in the patriarchal society. The values which a mother tries to infuse in her
daughter and restrictions which she puts on her are simply the modes of survival in
patriarchy.

Sivasankari narrates the changes in the life of women between 1965 to 1985
through Charu and her daughter Aparna. She struggles to solve the unending arguments
between her daughter Aparna and Vimala, her grandmother. Vimala complains about her
eating habits, her ideas about diet, watching cricket till late night, going for movies,
returning home late and the list has no end. Vimala blames her for drinking a glass of
buttermilk and munching carrots like a rabbit for dinner. She worries about her health and
asks her to go to bed early without watching cricket. Aparna replies shrewdly that she
cannot read *The Ramayana* like her grandmother. Though Aparna seems to be a tough
and stubborn girl she understands the difficulty when the combat continues between her
daughter Bulbul and her mother Charu. Charu blames Bulbul for having changed her
name, for going for trekking with her classmates and the list is unending. As a mother,
Aparna forms a link between the grandmother who becomes the tutor of the norms and
granddaughters who try to liberate from the bonds. In the book *Daughter and Mothers:*
*Mothers and Daughters*, Signe Hammer points out, “For any daughter, the relationship
with her mother is the first relationship in her life, and may also be the most important
she will ever have” (1). Hence the role of a mother is crucial and it is better tackled by the
mothers of modern era. Saru resembles Aparna in tackling the problems and in her
attempt to minimise the communication gap.

In every generation old women worries about the life style of the forth coming
generations with the intension of training them to adjust. But a lot of changes are
witnessed from Sivakamu who got married at the age of seven, Periya Pappa who revolted to take bath after returning from school, Mythili who refused to learn music when she was not granted permission to learn classical dance, Padmini who has got permission to go for NCC trip with the concurrence of her parents during her puberty, Aparna who watches movies with her friend in the theatre and Bulbul who goes for trekking with her classmates to the Himalayas. The child marriage system was abolished. Girls are educated and they establish their identity through their career. But still equal priority in the family or in the society is far-off. Virginia Woolf in A Room for One’s Own says, “Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size” (35). This craving has to be changed.

While analysing closely the works of Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari ample scopes are available to sketch the transformations in the personality of Woman from her childhood at every age in India. They focus on the life style of women, their wishes and wants, the crisis that limit their extent, the demands from society on an individual, their economical status and the rights given for women in general and girl children in particular. Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari never advice or provide solution to their readers. In turn ample freedom is given for the readers to read, analyse and to reach a conclusion. In the interview to K.Sirisha, Shashi Deshpande stated, “I think about what I see in and around me. The solution has to come from the reader himself. It is not the writer’s job to offer solutions to the problems but may be novels help you to understand your situations seeing something in the novel which is slightly similar to your own. You
get an understanding of your own situation. You always have to take your own steps” (221).

Though both the writers do not want them to be labelled as feminist they speak about the family unit and the importance of women in the unit. Shashi Deshpande told K.Sirisha: “My novels are women centered and I am not a feminist. You find contradiction there… I do not believe that novel is meant to give any message to reader. But, it will make you think. It brings new ideas in your head. It makes you doubt which you have already believed in. It makes you ask question and may be you try to find the answers…Women are main characters most of the times but, it does not mean that I don’t write about men. I write about people, women are also people."

Their women protagonists are very intelligent and capable of self-analysis. They never go back to the same point and they keep moving on. As they cross their adolescence there is certainly a change in their mental attitude. They make their life successful without escaping from the house, marriage and family unit. The changes are witnessed in their life style and economic independence. Both the writers never think that the solution to the problem emerge when women escape from the problem or situation. In their work women find solution to their crisis within the limit and they understand that changes would be introduced gradually in any society as it is a time consuming process.

Women characters are given the lens of importance and at times a few men are introduced when situation demands. N.B.Masal in his article entitled “Shashi Deshpande’s “A Matter of Time as an Exploration of a Woman’s Inner Self” says, “To present the world of mothers, daughters and wives is also to present indirectly the fathers,
sons and husbands, the relation between men and women, and between women themselves” (146).

The rebellion, rejection and their demand for freedom from the traditional norms and way of life indicate not only the mental agony of girls in the society but also the state of mind and expectation of men from women. “As the woman of our house, you should do…” is a familiar and recurring refrain. From time immemorial, women have been the driving force of the family by managing the household effectively and efficiently. Child-rearing has been one of the important roles of woman. In turn she expects career development and self respect. The voices of young girls are accepted and it is obviously seen through the changes in their life style in every generation. The training given to them is also with the right perspective to preserve the family unit and to inculcate patience and endurance in them. Jaya Krishna Baral and Aparajita Chowdhury in their article “Family in Transition: Power and Development” say, “In a family, it is the female members who are invariably at the receiving end of violence. Over the years, violence in family has grown both in scope and intensity of which women are the worst victims” (148).

Though the educated mothers of modern era develop cordial relationship with their daughters another significant dimension of mother-daughter bond is highlighted by Judith Kegan Gardiner when she states, “The positive side of the mother-daughter relationship, its interdependent nurturance and warm attachment, also creates problems. The daughter must pattern herself after her mother, acquire her gender identity, learn her roles, and at the same time differentiate herself as a person” (147). The toughness,
severity and demanding temperament bestow the daughters the required strength in their life.

The efforts taken to bring such changes are immeasurable. The Supreme Court quoted Manusmṛti, the most important and earliest metrical work of the Dharmaśāstra which was published in the title “Supreme Court: The Sentinel of Women’s Rights” written by Siddharth Badkul. It says, "Yatra naryastu pujuyante ramante tatra Devata, yatraitaastu na pujuyante sarvaastatrafalaah kriyaah", which means “Women are honored where, divinity blossoms there, and where women are dishonored, all action no matter how noble remain unfruitful”.

Gandhiji said that educating a girl means educating the whole family for she is the other wheel of the family-chariot. Jawaharlal Nehru, Leader of India's Independence movement, and India's first Prime Minister says "You can tell the condition of a Nation by looking at the status of its Women. (qtd. in Bose 146)“ Swami Vivekananda says, “It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing” (qtd. in Sharma 18). Sunil Jaglan, a Haryana village headman’s online drive for the girl child went viral on Twitter after Prime Minister Narendra Modi endorsed it. Appreciating the initiative and pitching for a campaign to save the girl child, Modi asked all fathers to send their ‘selfies’ with their daughters to him, out which he will retweet the good ones.

Awareness is given by the Manusmṛti, the most important and earliest metrical work of the Dharmaśāstra, great leaders, officials and women writers about the importance of improving the life style of girls in India. Shashi Deshpande and
Sivasankari works depict the enhanced changes in the life style of girls in India from early twentieth century. But they try to explain that the better changes are yet to be introduced which need time, patience and tolerance. A lot of social evils against girls are yet to be eradicated and the society has to be enlightened. The works of Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari will serve as beacon light to bring awareness about the existing sociological bias and to eliminate and wipe out the hindrances that stand in the path of girl children in India.