CHAPTER IV
FROM DESPAIR TO HOPE

Shashi Deshpande’s novel *A Matter of Time* and Sivasankari’s *Poy* are the continuation of their exploration into the many facets of feminine experience. They analyse how married women are handicapped and hampered by the desertion of men in the family. The sudden silence, absence or indifference of men in the family shakes the equilibrium of women and children. Sumi and Kalyani in *A Matter of Time* and Dhurga in *Poy* are not even given enough space to understand and incorporate the disloyalty or infidelity of Gopal, Shripati and Giri. At the same time Sumi and Dhurga are bound to explain the situation and the decision of Gopal and Giri to their children. Their protagonists Sumi and Dhurga not only are left unaided while enduring the abandonment of their husbands but also are compelled to explain their plight to their children. The novelists depict the predicament of the educated middle class women, their stress, anxiety, the state of mind of children, the loss and the pain through Sumi and Dhurga and uneducated women through Kalyani. Sumi gets a chance to compare her life style with her mother Kalyani and grandmother Manorama and Dhurga a chance to think about the future of her children. The support of the fathers of the protagonists to their daughters and grandchildren serves as an easy outlet for men to escape with ease. The support rendered by Kalyani’s father, Sumi’s father and Dhurga’s father at the pertinent point of time saves the family.

The women of the previous generation were destined to depend on either their husbands or parents as they are economically reliant but the educated modern women
stand on their own by resolving the crisis better than their comrades of their previous
generation. The problem of escaping from family for lame reasons after a few years of
married life by men still exists but their career gives them the solace and the needed
thrust to overcome the economic problem. Simone de Beauvoir says:

Now, woman has always been man’s dependant, if not his slave; the two
sexes have never shared the world in equality. And even today woman is
heavily handicapped, though her situation is beginning to change. Almost
nowhere is her legal status the same as man’s, and frequently it is much to
her disadvantage. Even when her rights are legally recognised in the
abstract, long-standing custom prevents their full expression in the
mores. (19)

The children feel offended when the family unit is shattered. Their hopes are ruined
when they are left helpless. A Matter of Time and Poy offer a scope to understand the
passive suffering of women, familial relationships and the psyche of children into deeper
realms.

Shashi Deshpande presents three generation of women in a family to make the
readers to understand the clear changing perspectives in their way of life. Manorama, the
mother of Kalyani felt that accomplishing or achieving completeness in life became a
mirage as Kalyani was her only heir. She was totally disappointed when Kalyani lost her
son in the railway station and Shripati stopped talking with Kalyani. Kalyani suppressed
her daughters and tuned them as subservient, submissive and obedient when they were
young to meet the demands of Shripati. She has learnt to adjust as per Shripati’s dictum
and style of life and imposed the rules on her daughters. Sumi and Premi have learnt to be quite good and passive without questioning their father or his attitude. They have accepted life as it is without any revolt.

When Gopal leaves his wife Sumi and his three daughters, Sumi becomes bold to face the world with her daughters by seeking a right profession. She does not want to be a parasite. Her education gives her the courage to take apt decisions. Aru, the eldest daughter of Sumi shows her open protest and corners Gopal with her questions. She supports Sumi in all her endeavours. She takes a leading role in guiding not only Sumi for a divorce but also supports her grandmother Kalyani in all her works. The discussions of Aru with her sister Charu, aunt Premi and the lawyer show her will power and confidence. She withstands all the pressures even after the sad demise of her mother Sumi and her grandfather Shripati. She bids good bye to her father and promises to take care of her grandmother Kalyani and sisters at the age of eighteen. Shashi Deshpande presents three generation of women to show how women of every generation is better than their ancestors though the problem remains the same.

Sivasankari portrays the pain and suffering of Dhurga and her children when Giri leaves the family after a few years of happy married life in the novel Poy. Giri shows reverence for the parents of Dhurga, loves and adores Dhurga, and celebrates his two sons Visu and Jaggu. Giri who has hesitated to leave the family for a training programme at England for six months, sends a divorce notice to Dhurga to marry a rich American widow Linda. Dhurga loses all her hopes and becomes inactive for sometime in spite of the support from her parents and mother-in-law. The family life becomes much more
demanding for Dhurga, when Giri distances himself from his responsibilities. A sense of isolation and despair ruins Dhurga’s daily routine. She is hampered and handicapped. Visu and Jaggu feel a sense of loss. Giri leaves the family without a prior intimation by blaming his unimpressive life with Dhurga. He fails to realise that raising the children is the most challenging phase of life, especially when it has to be done singly. He conveniently forgets the fact that single parenting after divorce can wear the members of the family out emotionally, financially and physically. But as educated middle class woman she succeeds by revealing the real temperament of Giri to her children and walks out of his life. Sivasankari ends her novel by giving ample scope for the readers to think about the future of Dhurga and her children. Restructuring the life by facing the social remarks in Indian society will become a challenge for Dhurga to handle. Patrick F.Fagan and Aaron Churchill state the predicament of children. “The divorced homes show a decrease in language stimulation, pride, affection, stimulation of academic behavior, encouragement of social maturity, and warmth directed towards the children. The presence of fewer toys and games is common, as is an increase in physical punishment (3)”.

Both Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari think that family is an essential social institution which is indispensable for stabilising the society. The family and its members execute certain functions that facilitate and assist the prosperity and progress of the society. The family plays an important and significant role in guiding the children for adult life. As the prime agent of socialisation and enculturation, the family educates children the social and cultural norms, values, beliefs, attitudes and the ways of thinking and behaving. Parents teach their children manners and civility. A well-groomed child
mirrors the parents. Each family member is set a definite role to preserve the family as a whole. The differentiation of the roles in the families makes certain that families are well-balanced and synchronised. When any one of the parents rejects their roles, the family is thrown out of balance and must recalibrate to function properly. Marriage involves very diverse functions such as bearing and rearing children, establishing relationships of intimacy and devotion, and sharing the mutual goals.

When men move away from family by indicating the existing flaws in the family or the system in the society, it cannot be compensated. The loss becomes unbearable and the children’s hopes are shattered. In Indian society men finds an easy escape and they move away from the marriage institution without a guilty conscious. In turn women are levied with the responsibility of facing the catastrophe. They are destined to balance their daily routine, financial crisis, counseling the children and answering the queries of the neighbours. The children feel distressed and alienated when they are dislocated. Men move by disowning the children overnight but women voluntarily start playing the dual role. Even then their rejection leaves a scar in the minds of children which is noticed only by mothers and the fathers leave no ears to the anxieties.

Marriage and family are the key structures in most societies. The bond between the institution of marriage and the institution of family is the prime focus in any society because, traditionally, marriages form the family unit, and the families are the essential social unit upon which the society is built. Both marriage and family engender status roles that are approved by the society. Families perform fundamental roles for the society to construct a happy environment not only within the members of the family but also in
the society. Physical, emotional, and social well-being of individuals depend on the constructive and stable family unit. Parents care for and socialise their children and prepare the new members of the society for their future roles.

The family unit determines how a child turns out as an adult. It enables its members to feel a sense of belonging and explains the status of an individual in the society. Family is a source from where members of the family get comfort, support, affection, security and protection. The values, skills, and behaviour are taught in families. Within the family unit, each member has their own individual aspirations in addition to be the part of the collective. Each member should be made to feel unique and special and encouraged to follow their goals and dreams. The important aspect is that each member should feel that they can express their opinions openly and their voice is as important as any other family member’s. A healthy family resolves all the budding crisis without difficulty and aids the younger members to gain an understanding of how to deal with conflict when they become adults.

Strong families administer their learning experiences in a healthy way. They guide their children into the world outside the home. They do not let social forces to rule their family life. They involve themselves in neighborhood, school, government, and business in many ways that support their family values. Strong families teach by example and learn through experience. Strong families have a sense of loyalty and devotion toward their family members. They stand by each other during times of trouble. Loyalty builds through sickness and health, want and good fortune, failure and success, and all the things the family faces. In times of personal success or defeat, the family becomes a
cheering section or a mourning bench. Love is at the heart of the family. The family is normally the place where love is expressed.

All of a sudden if the family is left without its head, the members of the family cultivate a sense of fear to face the world. The questions that surround them threaten the members especially the children. Such situations create despair in the minds of children. Gopal and Giri are depicted as loving husbands for Sumi and Dhurga and caring fathers to their children in A Matter of Time and Poy. When Gopal and Giri decide to leave the family, the members of their family are afraid that they would be the laughing stock of the society. Laughter balances the efforts of all and gives everyone a realistic view of things. To be helpful, family laughter must be positive in nature. Laughing together builds up a family. Laughing at the private affairs of others hurts the affected members. Society is yet to learn to show concern for the private affairs of others. Gossiping about the private matters of others is considered as the pass time of many in the society. Human nature is yet to be refined even after centuries of civilisation. Laughter should be used in a positive way to release tensions, gain a clearer view and bond relationships. But the kith and kin of Sumi and Dhurga worry about the response of the society.

The dissolution of the family relationship is explained by Sahshi Deshpande in her novel A Matter of Time in a very simple way when the novel starts. Shashi Deshpande offers the readers a forum to understand the life of Sumi, her mother Kalyani and her grandmother Manorama and explains how the crisis has been handled by women of three generation who belong to the same family. Her family secrets are slowly revealed and the readers are shocked to see the burden taxed on married women. The
family cart is towed by women without the support of men. N.B. Masal in his article “A Matter of Time as an Exploration of a Woman’s Inner Self” states, “Her writing comes out of her consciousness of the conflict between her idea of herself as a human being and the idea that society has of her as a woman”(17).

Sumi who is then watching the circus in the television sees her husband Gopal entering inside the house. She offers him a casual greeting to join her to watch the programme in the television. The invitation and the casual gesture of Sumi indicate the intimacy between them. But the cat is out when Gopal discloses his plan of leaving the house. The decision of Gopal shocks not only Sumi but also the readers. Gopal discloses his future plan in a few minutes but for Sumi it takes time to accept his decision. Sumi cannot believe his statement.

Thinking that he will join her, she draws up her feet, making room for him on the sofa. But he goes to a chair opposite to her, from where, she knows, he cannot see the TV. She gestures to him to turn it round. When he does nothing, scarcely, in fact, notices her gesture, she begins reluctantly to get up to do it herself. This time he stops her with a word – ‘don’t!’ And only then for the first time, she turns her eyes away from the screen and gives him her whole attention. (8)

Gopal is the respected professor, loyal husband of Sumi and loving father of Aru, Charu and Seema. He articulates his future plan and leaves the family for reasons even he cannot express. He simply discards his duty as a father and husband. He neither discusses about the education and marriage of his three daughters nor the future expenses of the
family though he knows the financial status of the family. Sumi’s world is torpedoed though the decision is Gopal’s. He completes his statements without consuming much time which cannot be digested by Sumi. Without a prelude or prologue he leaves them thinking that it is the duty of Sumi to speak about his future plans to their three daughters. “The telling of what he has come to say takes him so little time that when he has done, the song is still going on. He looks at her for a reaction, but she is still gazing at him just as expectantly, waiting for him to go on…he goes out as quietly as he had come in” (8-9).

In the morning Sumi finds the empty bed of Gopal and she concludes, “So it is true what he told her, he meant it, he’s already done it” (9). Sumi is left alone to explain the plans of Gopal to her grown-up children. She searches for words to narrate the incident and thinks, “…he could have spared me this, he could have spoken to them himself… she tells them about it, almost exactly repeating Gopal’s words, leaving out nothing” (9).

Aru recollects how she had been once separated from Gopal in a crowd when she was a child. She stayed in the same place. She told him then, “I was not lost. It was you who got lost” (10). She thinks that the same thing happens to them. Aru understands the panic and the disorientation of being lost. She patiently answers the questions of her daughters and listens to their repeated exclamations. Sumi tries her best to tackle the situation. She is not irritated or annoyed which is viewed with suspicion by her daughters. They suspect that the decision of Gopal might be known by her earlier. But as a typical Indian mother, she faces the situation courageously as she has no other option. She is sure that she cannot run away from her duties as Gopal. She knows that the needs of
adolescent teen age daughters, their education, career and marriage are to be taken care of by her. To make her daughters feel at ease she continues her work in the kitchen. Sumi’s calmness and her normal behaviour make them to think that Gopal would come back after their quarrel is settled.

Aru and Charu want to take some steps to reunite the family. Shashi Deshpande not only presents the psychological disturbances of Sumi and her daughters after Gopal walked out on them but also their eagerness to take the necessary steps to avoid further calamity. “The two older girls feel that they should do something, but they do not know what it is they can do” (11). Sumi has neither uttered the name of Gopal after his departure nor expresses her anger when the girls speak of him. Her indifference disquiets her three daughters as much as it agitates her readers. She seeks the help of her father Shripati till the things get settled. As a typical Indian father he comes home to rescue his daughter Sumi and granddaughters. He rarely comes to their house. The girls think, “The sight of him in their house is rare that it is loaded with significance. There is no doubt that he knows that he has come for a definite purpose” (11). He takes them to the Big House as Sumi cannot meet the financial burden alone. She is unemployed and Gopal leaves her without any aid. Sumi has only courage and endurance to face the world but not money. The expenses of education and marriage never make Sumi to disown her daughters. As a typical mother she holds the entire weight on her shoulders. The pain of the disintegration of the family troubles Aru and she likes to set the whole lot right. Sumi’s confidence, which is the fruit of her education, is appreciable. She is certain that she can lead a life by seeking a suitable job.
Shashi Deshpande shows the pain of dislocation and the time taken by the children to settle things right for no mistake of them. Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of Great Britain says, “There is no doubt that it is around the family and the home that all the greatest virtues, the most dominating virtues of humans, are created, strengthened and maintained” (qtd. in Rautbord 5). If stresses are imposed on children due to the disintegration of the family, all the good virtues in them will expire before sprouting out. The society in turn will be suffocated with members without valuable contribution. Confucius, the Chinese philosopher and educator rightly points out, “To put the world right in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must first cultivate our personal life; we must first set our hearts right (qtd.in Abaquin 117). Family is the foundation from where all the good traits needed for human race can be traced. So far the daughters of Sumi have been given the needed care and concern in excess and they fail to realise what is wrong with Gopal. They love to laugh but hate to be laughed at by the society. They do not know how to explain their situation to their neighbours and relatives. So they want to take some steps before the situation is known to others. The freedom of thought and action is an excellent sign among the young girls which is the healthier changing perspective in Indian society.

Kalyani, Sumi’s mother welcomes them without knowing their plight. She abandons all her questions to arrange beds for them to sleep. When Seema discloses the secret, she looks at the face of Sumi with a little hope and understands the situation. Kalyani cries after hearing Gopal’s decision not only as the offended mother of Sumi but also as a wife. Kalyani and Shripati, live in oppressive silence and they have not spoken
to each other in thirty-five years. When the history repeats again she cannot accept or assimilate the facts. Kalyani’s pain is not only the hurt of the mother after the desertion of her daughter’s husband but also the suffering of a woman who is left without care.

“Kalyani’s reaction astounds her granddaughters. ‘No,’ she cries out, ‘no, my God, not again.’ She begins to cry sounding so much like an animal in pain that Aru covers her ears against the sound”(12).

The change in the environment upsets Aru and her sisters. She is not aware of the reasons for the silence between her grandmother Kalyani and grandfather Shripati. So when she hears the howling of her grandmother all the hopes of Aru shatter. She thinks, “My God what’s happening to us and what am I doing, lying here on the floor like a refugee?” (12) The girls have brought nothing with them but nightdress. They keep moving up and down for things which disturb them further. Sumi shifts the house to give protection to the girls who are in their teens. Sumi tries her level best to give the girls the comfort with the support of her parents. But Aru feels like a refugee and longs to settle at the earliest with the hope that her father would come back to take them. Shashi Deshapande presents the pathetic mental stress of the children. The daughters try to assume the plan of Gopal but fail in their attempt. They do not know what to do next or with whom to discuss.

‘How long do we go on like this?’ Aru has returned from her third trip of the day, getting some books, and her face is hollow with exhaustion. ‘Do you think, Charu, he’s dead?’

‘Don’t you think Sumi would have known if he was? No I don’t think he’s dead.’
‘But then what? My God, we’ve got to do something.’
‘What do we do? Put an add in the pare saying—“Come home, Papa, Sumi, all forgiven”. Or do we stick on him among the missing persons on the TV? (15)

They discuss the reason for his sudden decision. Sumi says that she does not know when asked. They do not doubt Sumi. The action of Gopal disturbs their daily routine and their equilibrium. The present status threatens them. Sumi thinks that the reason for the departure of Gopal lies within him. “While others are trying to find reasons for what he has done, she knows that the reason lies inside him, the reason is him” (25). But he does not give the answer to Sumi for leaving the family. She likes to ask Gopal what makes him to walk out on his family and all that he owns in age of acquisition and possession. She knows that Gopal has absolute faith in the society where he is a part. So she likes to ask, “I remember this so clearly, it was you who said that we are shaped by the age we live in, by the society we are part of. How then can you, in this age, a part of this society, turn your back on everything in your life? Will you be able to give me an answer to this?” (27)

Sumi broods over the advantage of joint family where any loss of a member in the family would be compensated by the support of other family members. Sumi moans for the disintegration of joint family system. “There was a time when a man could leave walked out of his home and the seamless whole of the joint family would have enclosed his wife and children, covered his absence.” (13) Shashi Deshpande strongly supports joint family. The disintegration of joint family is another changing aspect in Indian society.
Sense of alienation, inactivity, the questions by the society and unidentified fears chase Aru day and night and she likes to do something to turn their life positive. She thinks that the decision of Gopal has brought shame and disgrace to their family. “Aru is soon to realize … they are trapped into inactivity by that great fear of all –the fear of losing face. Gopal’s desertion is not just a tragedy, it is both a shame and a disgrace” (13). Aru realises that none of the family members has visited them including Goda, the sharer of Kalyani’s joys and sorrows, her daughter Devaki or Ramesh, Gopal’s friend. Everyone knows that they are away from the house but no one enquires. Nagi, the servant-maid who has been working at Kalyani’s house for more than ten years has no such hesitation. When Aru gets angry with her, Nagi is very practical. “She knows has Kalyani told her? Or is she guessing? – and makes this clear to them by her repeated ‘Poor things’, by her clucks of sympathy. ‘Stop staring, Nagi, Aru exclaims angrily. ‘Have I suddenly grown an extra nose?’ ‘What’s the use of getting angry with me? It’s all our luck, it’s written here, we can’t escape it’” (14).

When Nagi feels for their plight Aru gets irritated though she thinks that none of her relative has visited them. She does not know how to react. When Nagi explains how her son in law deserted her daughter Lakshmi for other woman, Aru and Charu want to change the subject. They are afraid to think of their situation and shun the conversation to escape from the reality. They are made to balance on the edge of the hope for the return of Gopal. They expect his arrival whenever the gate creaks or the phone rings. When Aru rides on Gopal’s scooter Sumi rushes out in absolute anxiety. Aru sees the eagerness on her face and Aru decides to invite Sumi’s sister Premi to find a solution to the never ending problems. Everyone comes out with the reason for Gopal’s decision. “The
conversation centres around: where is he? Has no one any idea? Only when they have exhausted all the possibilities of this do they go on to the ‘why’” (15).

Ramesh wants to search Gopal but he has to explain them about his disappearance from the family. In Indian society it is not easy to explain such matters with ease. People may ask several questions and Ramesh is afraid to face the questions. Aru’s anxiety is justified after reading the hesitation of Ramesh. Sumi explains Ramesh that they have to face the world because they are destined without any hope. She understands that the disappearance of Gopal cannot be kept as a secret within four walls for a long time. “Say it, Ramesh, say he’s missing, say he’s walked out on his wife and children. It’s has got to come out sometime, how long are we going to hide it from the world? And do you think people don’t know? I’m sure they do and frankly I don’t care” (21).

Sumi is right and her words narrate the impossibility of concealing Gopal’s act from the society for a long time as everyone relies on society. The practical truth hurts Aru. Sumi thinks that people will not remain silent. When they ask, Sumi gathers courage to recite the truth. The statement of Sumi irritates Aru and she shouts. Her reaction to her mother’s words is violent and sharp. “You don’t care?”… ‘That’s wonderful. You don’t care about Papa having left us, I care about not having our own house. I don’t want to live like this, as if we’re sitting on a railway platform, I want my home back. I want my father back…”” (21).

Sumi tries to give them all the needed comfort. She loves them and cares for them. She wants to fill the vacuum created by the disappearance of the head of the family. She likes to lead the children in the right direction by providing them the needed
comfort which was not given by Kalyani to Sumi and Premi when they were silenced by Shripati’s silence. “She shows no outward sign of distress, but the girls notice a new habit in her, of touching them, holding their hands, smoothing their hair, as if this physical contact is a manifestation of some intense emotion within her” (33). The longing of Aru and her sisters is the reunion with their father. They see the efforts of Sumi and her balanced mental state though their distress neither permits them to admire her care nor appreciate her patience. The care of Sumi for her daughters and their anxiety for reuniting the family is also a changing perspective in Indian society.

Sumi and Premi have been trying their best to avoid thinking about the breach between Kalyani and Shripati and never initiated steps to solve the problem between their parents even after their marriage. Kalyani did not even know to think of her status in the family and the condition of her children Sumi and Premi when they were young.

Gopal knows that his reasons are good to be discussed with a doctor. “What do I say? What were the lines I had to prepared? I heard a voice…. No, I cannot say that, it sounds utterly phoney. Even Joan of Arc didn’t get away with that one. It’s a kind of illness, a virus, perhaps, which makes me incapable of functioning as a full human being, as a husband and father…”(41). He thinks that his wife Sumi may understand his troubles without realising the burden he has levied on her shoulders. He never feels guilty for leaving the family without prior intimation or financial aid. He thinks of all probable reasons to convince people. “I stopped believing in the life I was leading, suddenly it seemed unreal to me and I knew I could not go on” (41). He knows well that his actions cannot be justified and hence he fails to articulate the exact idea behind leaving the
family. He feels comfortable as no question is posted by Sumi. He is left free by Sumi and he feels relaxed. He thinks, “I am thankful I never had to suffer the mortification of wading through this slush of embarrassing half-truths” (41).

Sumi tells Ramesh, “I’ve begun to think that what Gopal has really done is to take sanyas. I’m surprised none of you have thought of that. But look what’s happened—it’s not he who’s going around with the begging bowl, it’s I who am doing that”(123). S.Prasanna Sree in his article entitled “Shashi Deshpande’s A Matter of Time: A Study” rightly observes, Gopal’s renunciation “cannot be equated to the Vedic renunciation of ‘sanyasa’ and it appears to be renunciation, it is skin-deep only” (194).

Every society is made up of blocks of family units. The stronger each block is, the stronger the structure of the society. Families are thus the building blocks upon which rest the fate of society. For the development of good families, the mother and the father play a vital role. It has been said that it is easy to bear children but it is difficult to raise them well. When Gopal goes off leaving the family uncared, Aru is forced to disclose the family secret to her aunt Premi. Shashi Deshpande explains the anxiety created and the resultant stress which pulls Aru down. Premi is surprised by the resignation of Gopal from the University teaching job. But Kalyani who has been surprisingly silent calls it as the fate. After the visit of Premi they congregate like mourners for a death in the family. Sumi painfully thinks, “…but a death in a distant land, a death without a body” (20). The words of Sumi enter inside the minds of the readers like a sword. Shashi Deshpande’s choice of words lingers in the minds of readers for a long time.
Premi speaks with Gopal about his attitude and the reason for leaving the family. He replies that he is tired of living with them. He comes out with prepared answers to escape from all the hurdles that stand in his way in the form of questions from Aru, Kalyani and Premi and all are bewildered. He locks himself aloof and prohibits the entry of anyone inside his venue.

“Why did you you do it, Gopal?”

“We did it? I can give you so many answers, but I’ve begun thinking that the plain truth is that I just got tired.”

Tired? Of Sumi? (133)

Premi asks Gopal to consider his responsibility as a father of three young girls in Indian society. Gopal recollects the marriage of his mother with his uncle after the death of her first husband which burdens him. Gopal’s mother married her own brother-in law after her husband’s death. Her first husband, Sudha’s father died of typhoid and Gopal was born two years after the marriage of his parents. He isolated him after knowing the truth. He considers his father as his mother’s guilty partner and as Sudha’s step uncle, step father and his mother’s husband. He replies that their marriage lies on his shoulder as an unendurable weight. He says that his suffering prevents him to lead a normal life. “…to think of being the purpose of my parents life would have been too heavy burden for me to carry. Can I then burden my children with that load? No, Premi, the meaning has to be found in your own life” (135). If he is really affected by their marriage, the enlightenment should have stopped him from marrying Sumi or else he can help the daughters financially till they are well settled in their career. He leaves the family for the mistake of his mother and he never broods over what will happen to the psyche of his children if he
abandons them at their teen age. Aru loses hope in marriage and view married life with scornful eyes. Charu focuses on studies to get a good score to join medical course and Seema seeks refugee under Kalyani with fear.

Premi painfully replies to Gopal “You don’t know what you’re doing to your children, Gopal.”(135) Gopal is calm and composed.

And Sumi is just forty, she has a long way to go.’

‘She says she’s getting a job’

‘That’s not what I meant,’ Premi flashes at him. ‘it’s not money that she needs, it’s a normal family life.’

‘A normal family life?’

‘You know what I mean. She needs you, she needs a husband.’

‘And for a long time I haven’t been that to her.’(135)

Gopal answers all the questions of Premi but she is not convinced by his answers. Premi recollects her childhood days and her suffering because of the misunderstanding between her parents. She recalls the silenced life led by Sumi, Premi and their mother Kalyani. She states her mental agony and asks Gopal to reassess his decision. “I never brought any of our friends home. What if they asked me about my father? What if they asked me—why does he ring a bell? Why doesn’t he talk to you and your mother? And when the girls spoke of their parents, even of their quarrels, I felt like a leper. Don’t do this to your girls, Gopal” (135).

Premi worries because when the father departs from the house, the wife and children will be forced to explain the reason for his sudden banishment to the people
around them. She pleads Gopal not to depart them. Premi is totally confused by the answers and temperament of Gopal. She has many doubts after her discussion with Gopal. She likes to clarify all her doubts. She asks whether he loves his children. He answers that the question is irrelevant and his answer shocks Premi. She asks, “Irrelevant? My God, irrelevant!” (136)

Premi tells Gopal that Aru is seeking legal opinion from her husband Anil who is a lawyer. Gopal replies quietly, “Aru has to go her own way he says at last. I can’t do anything about it” (136). Premi becomes helpless when Gopal’s answers unarm her. Premi returns without any success. Gopal is stubborn and inflexible. Aru discusses about Premi’s meeting with Gopal. Premi says that he articulates ideas which lack sense. His reasons make Premi to wonder whether she asked him the right questions. Aru answers that she is no longer interested in his answers. “That’s absolutely rubbish. What right questions? There’s only one—why has he done this? Actually to tell you the truth, I’m no longer interested in his answer. What difference does it make to us, anyway? I only want him to realize he can’t get away scot-free. He shouldn’t be able to do this and just walk away” (137-138).

Aru demands Premi to let her know the reason for the odd relationship between her grandparents. Sumi has just told Aru that they lost a child and she does not comprehend the actual reason. Sumi and Premi never discussed about it and as children they accepted what was destined for them unlike Aru and Charu. Premi and Sumi were totally different from Aru. They neither discussed nor questioned even among themselves. Premi considered it as a shame than knowing of what really had happened.
After marriage Sumi turned her back on the shadow in the family. Premi desperately wanted to escape but walked right back into the family secret and family history. She knows the secret from her mother-in-law. Premi has never disclosed the secret to anyone.

In her confusion, Aru’s mind spirals towards her father and the communication gap between her grandparents Kalyani and Sripati. She concludes that Gopal’s decision and the life of her grandparents are not independent occurrence but interconnected. Many questions bubble out from her mind. “‘Why doesn’t Baba come down? Why doesn’t he have his meals here with the rest of us? Why doesn’t he ever speak to Kalyani? She is his wife, isn’t she? And why is she so frightened of him? He rings the bell and she responds, he controls her from a distance. What has Amma done to make him behave this way towards her? (39)’” Aru waits with the hunger for information and Premi feels the need to reveal what had happened between Kalyani and Shripati.

The incident happened at V.T Station when Kalyani was returning home to Bangalore for the holidays. Kalyani lost her son when Shripati had gone to check the reservations. He left Kalyani and the two daughters in the railway station till Premi’s father-in-law found them. Kalyani was sitting on the platform with the children and the luggage waiting for Shripati. He was searching for the lost child in the city like a mad man. He searched in the streets, railway platforms, beaches, hospitals and mortuaries. “Baba had not spoken to her since the day it happened” (140). Premi’s father-in-law had sheltered Kalyani till her father came and took her away. “He was much mentally retarded. I believe he was—he used to be quite violent. He was very well grown physically. Amma found it hard to manage him” (141). Aru turns aggressive after listening to the fate
of her grandmother Kalyani. She likes to be angry with her grandfather Shripati but her anger violently turns towards her father Gopal.

Sumi sees always an apparition before her like a sketch and the lines merge to form the figure of her mother. As a small girl she saw her mother standing before the closed doors with her open palms shrieking and begging pardon to open the door. At last she slumped on the floor in vain. Then silence enclosed the house and as a child she was terrified to look at her mother who lies in a huddle. As a child she said to herself, “I didn’t see it, I saw nothing, nothing happened” (74). After all these years she recollects what she has tried to erase from her memory as a child. Kalyani was helped by Goda her cousin to come down from the stairs. “... Kalyani, as if foreshadowing her old age, bent, clinging to the banisters, her face spent and hollow” (74).

Kalyani banged her head wildly at the closed door of her husband in vain. Sumi and Premi remained silent. They never asked anything to their mother and father. They have not taken any steps to rebuild the communication gap till then. Premi worries about the life of children to Gopal because they suffered when they were young. She is disturbed and requests Gopal to return back to lead a normal life. She does not want the next generation also to suffer like them in silence. “You don’t know what you’re saying. I go to bed with this burden of Sumi’s life, I wake up with it. You can’t do this Gopal. And why? For no reason, for nothing at all. Why, Gopal? Why? (136) She adds, “We’re a cursed family, Gopal. I’m frightened for our children” (137).

Simone de Beauvoir says, “A man is in the right in being a man; it is the woman who is in the wrong” (15). Her statement aptly suits the situation for Sumi and her family
members. Gopal says that his motto is right and thinks that all the others who approach him lack sense. Aru likes to be enlightened by the incidents in the life of Kalyani, Sumi and Premi. She is demanding and her urge is unique and exceptional. She does not like to escape from any bitter experience unlike Sumi and Premi. She never remains silent after her father’s disappearance from her family. She discusses the affairs of their grandparents to understand the common problem that links the life of Sumi with her mother Kalyani.

When Kalyani was renounced by her husband Shripati, Sumi and Premi accepted the situation and became accustomed to the life style indicated by their mother. They started speaking in a husky voice. They neither invited friends to their house nor argued with their father to set the things right. On the other hand, Aru who is then seventeen years old, brilliantly tackles situation and seeks the support of people to solve the crisis. The maturity of the present generation is substantial and positive. Aru seeks legal opinion from Anil who is a lawyer. She is stubborn. She hopes that justice should be given to her mother Sumi. She thinks that her mother should not be a silent sufferer like Kalyani. Her attitude and mental stability is admired and appreciated by Kalyani on her eighteenth birthday.

Aru’s encounter is unendurable for Gopal. She does not accept facts as Sumi and Premi. Kalyani visits him as a supplicant and requests him. But Aru visits him as an adversary holding her hostility before her like a weapon. Gopal is scared of Aru whereas Sumi and Premi were scared of their father. Aru behaves like an adult with maturity. She enquires calmly about his residence which provokes him, but he clarifies all her doubts. She asks, “Is it because of something Sumi did, something she said? Is it because of us,
because of me? Is it because I was rude to you, because I always argued with you? Is it because of what I said to you when you decided to resign? Is it money? … Say it, whatever it is, tell me, I am not a child” (50).

Gopal is questioned and demanded explanation for his deeds by the younger generation and it is an optimistic change in Indian society. Sumi and Premi never discussed their difficulty with their grandmother Manorama or Goda. But Aru who belongs to the younger generation seeks the help of Premi, her husband Anil and Surekaha, a lawyer to reunite their family. She meets Gopal and explains the feeling of displacement, the questions and innuendoes they have to face and the sense of shame and disgrace. She speaks about the change in Sumi, Charu’s desperation and Seema’s expectation about a birthday card from her father. She calls him as a cruel husband and unfeeling man. When Gopal gives no response to her expressions she asks, “Why did you get married at all, why did you have children?”(62) Aru’s questions are like sharp razor’s edge. When she tells him that she likes to consult a lawyer, he advises her not to do something wrong to herself. She replies, “Too late to show your concern” (63). Aru argues for the rights of Sumi and her sisters and threatens him when his words fail to convince her.

No question was raised against Shripati by her daughters when he broke his relationship with the family members. Shripati has been enjoying the liberty thinking that his decision is right. Sumi and Premi have never asked any explanation about the lost glory during her childhood days. Sumi views the words of care of Shripati with surprise in the Big House after her return as she has never seen him showing any concern or care.
He has been living a life of his own leaving his wife and daughters like refugees. Aru revolts, questions and frowns on Gopal for his escapism.

Manorama blamed Kalyani for her inability to build a healthy family. Manorama never spoke with her own brother Shripati for a compromise. On the other hand, Kalyani does not put the blame on Sumi but she takes an initiative to make a compromise between Sumi and Gopal than exploring who is right or who is wrong. Kalyani comes to Shanker’s Press with Charu, to ask Gopal the reason for his actions. Kalyani emerges as a strong individual in the novel when she steps out for a compromise. She does not charge Sumi as incompetent and unproductive like her mother. As a mother Kalyani stands apart. Charu makes it absolutely clear that she has come only as an escort to her grandmother. Kalyani accepts the decision of Charu and never forces her to speak with Gopal. Kalyani argues for Sumi and her children welfare with Gopal and at the same time sanctions Charu her freedom. The broad-mindedness and problem-solving ability of Kalyani surprises the readers as it is an additional new-fangled changing perspective in Indian society.

Aru, who belongs to the present generation and Kalyani who belongs to the past are in the same line to establish the rights of women in the society than blaming Sumi for Gopal’s decision. Aru stands unique not only as an ideal daughter but as well as a representative of silenced women unlike Sumi and Premi. Kalyani who does not know to solve her marital problem comes out of her circle to solve it at the earliest.

Charu scarcely looks at Gopal and helps Kalyani to climb the stairs. Charu is badly hurt as he left home without informing, explaining or showing them the right path
to move as a father. Kalyani bursts into words: “But Gopala, how could she have known what being a good wife means she never saw her mother being one? I taught her nothing, it’s all my fault, Gopala, forgive me and don’t punish her for it” (47). The painful word of Kalyani speaks volumes about the life led by her in the Big House. She does not have any good memories. Her fear chases her and she is absolutely scared by her daughter’s life. Gopal tries to convince her, but Kalyani hurries on. “Is it money, Gopala? If it is, you know that Sumi and you will have everything of mine. Premi is comfortable, I am not worried about her. Even my jewellery—most of it is for Sumi” (47). When Gopal says that Sumi has done nothing wrong and he is not harmed or offended by Sumi, Kalyani gets angry but conceals her temper fearing that she will alienate him by her anger. It shows her maturity and experience. She asks, “What about your daughters? Have you thought of them? Look at that girl standing out there – she didn’t want to come, she came here for my sake. Have you thought of what you have done to them?” (48) Kalyani goes down the stairs “like a woman much older than her years” (48). Though her words fail to convince Gopal, the steps taken by her linger in the minds of readers.

Kalyani’s housekeeping is disrupted by the help of Aru. She feels difficult to observe four people into her order of things. But she is reluctant to accept the help from Aru. Sumi finds Kalyani’s restrictions hard to bear. So she decides to shift the house. She makes up her mind to interfere after listening to Aru’s irritable responses to Kalyani’s questions. Sumi wants to give her daughters the best possible things. She never likes to leave them face any crucial or unwanted situation in their life. Sumi says, “Aru’s not a child. And listen, Amma, if we’re going to stay here, and who knows how long it’s going
to be, you’ll have to learn to take everyone’s help. If you can’t, it’s going to be hard on all of us” (36-37).

Sumi silently watches the girls and sees that they gradually get accustomed to normal life but they have withdrawn into themselves, each pursuing their activity with minimum interaction. After entering the house her daughters unconsciously and unknowingly lower their voices to the exact decibel required to keep them from being heard by their grandfather. She thinks, “I don’t want my daughters to live with a hand clasped over their mouths, like Premi and I had to” (59). Kalyani failed to take any initiative to change the life style of her children as she was unemployed and economically reliant. But Sumi cares only for the welfare of her daughters. Sumi wants her daughters to come out of the nightmare. She thinks that it is not possible in the house where people live in islands in silence. Sumi hates to give a constrained life to her daughters. She starts searching for a house to live with her children. “Kalyani’s past ... has nevertheless entered into us, into Premi and me, it has stained our bones....And will this, what is happening to me now, become part of my daughters too? Will I burden them with my past and my mother’s as well” (75). Sumi’s decision surprises the readers and it is an acknowledged and greeted change in India. Gradually the society lends its ears to the needs of girls as well.

When Sumi rides a scooter for the first time, a sense of insecurity fills Aru. It is quite natural for the children to feel insecure when one of the parents is not with the children. Gopal never cares for all such sentiments. Aru wanders near the gate and waits there until Sumi returns. She runs back after her. When she loses her balance Aru rushes
to hold her. She hugs her to help her to ride it better. “Aru wants to be the man of the family, Sumi thinks, when Aru insists on accompanying her mother to the dentist. She wants to take Gopal’s place, she wants to fill the blank Gopal has left in our lives. But Gopal never went to the dentist with me. He didn’t do so many of these things Aru is now doing” (36).

When Gopal quits the house, Sumi is entrusted with the duty of taking care of her three daughters who are in their teen ages. She is ready for the challenge with stubbornness which is viewed by Aru as insensitive attitude in the beginning. Aru realises Sumi’s capability later and thinks, “I thought she didn’t care about what Papa did, I thought she was uncaring, indifferent, I said angry words to her but I know now that was not true” (41). Aru likes to give her solace, comfort and consolation. She carefully escorts Sumi in all aspects. Aru renders her full support to Sumi. She persuades her and motivates her to go for a divorce. She does not want to get the share from her father’s property. She knows his economical status. She insists Sumi to take some steps. “Sumi, you’re making it too easy for him, you’re letting him get away with it. He’s getting scot-free. It’s not right, he must be made to realize what he has done” (61). When Sumi lacks interest, Aru is surprised. She cannot accept his father as an associate or paying guest in the family. She encourages her mother to take some fruitful steps which in turn gives Sumi the courage to live for her daughters. “Let him go? As if he’s a mere acquaintance or somebody with whom we have had a small misunderstanding? He’s our father, Ma, he’s your husband. How can you dismiss it so lightly? I don’t understand you at all” (61). This assurance was not given to Kalyani by her daughters. An unbridgeable gap between not only Kalyani and her husband Shripati but also between Kalyani and her
daughters is formed. A promising change in the outlook of present generation and the ardent support, bestow Sumi with infinite power.

Sumi does not want to take the support of Ramesh, Devi, Premi or her father like a parasite. When she expresses her wish to go off from the house her father gets angry. “Ramesh ready to give me money, and Devi and Premi, of course. And now you’re asking me if I need any money. It’s easy for me to take it from all of you, to go on living here free, sponging on you” (71). She shelters at her father’s residence temporarily and searches for the apt job. When Kalyani was left in the railway station with her daughters by Shripati, her father came to her rescue. At present it is the turn of Shripati to protect the family of her daughter. As the problem of men discarding the family is persistent till today, the support of father to the daughters exist till date.

Goda and Kalyani discuss about Vidyapati with whom Goda’s wedding was proposed at first. Kalyani’s mother rejected the proposal. But he died a year later. When Goda and Kalyani converse about his sad demise Sumi notices an involuntary shudder from Goda. The colour from her face drains and her hands clench into tight fists, as if she feels the dreadful flap of the wings of widowhood. Sumi wonders, “...is this what has helped Kalyani to endure everything, the fact that she is a wife and not a widow? The fact that she has the right all the privileges of the wife of a living husband?” (167) Sumi recollects the words of the old woman in Shaker’s press, “What is a woman without her husband?” (167) She thinks about the deep-rooted ideas in the psyche of women in India. She then wonders:
Is it enough to have a husband, and never mind the fact that he has not
looked at your face for years, never mind the fact that he has not spoken to
you for decades? Does this wifehood make up for everything, for the
depression of a man’s love, for the feel of his body against yours, the
warmth of his breath on your face, the touch of his lips on yours, his hands
on your breast? Kalyani lost all this (had she ever had them?) but her
kumkum is intact and she can move in the company of women with the
pride of a wife. (167)

She takes into consideration even the idea of Hrishi, a teen age boy. Hrishi says, “Too
many females here. It’s like a zenana” (60). She recollects what was once said by Gopal.
“‘It’s not easy to be the only male in a family of females. You feel so shut out’” (60).
Sumi likes to get rid of all such haunting fears to afford a productive life and prolific
career to her children. Her self-analysis about the want of women of the previous
generation gives a clear picture about the changing perspectives in Indian society.

Sumi’s father gave up everything, turned to solitude and broke all his relation
with his wife Kalyani because he is afraid of himself. He gets out of his unwanted
marriage with the lame excuse. Kalyani is victimised. When Aru speaks of the “sins of
patriarchy” (169), Sumi feels uneasy. Gopal leaves the family but Shripati after his futile
search for his son returned back to the family. The family was financially aided and
morally supported. Sumi doubts, “Why did my father come back? Was it his sense of
responsibility towards his wife and daughters? (169) The lateral thinking is the boon of
education to women and Aru enjoys the freedom of expression even at the age of
seventeen.
Sumi has not lost trust in life or marriage. Gopal’s ideas lack insight and intensity, whereas Sumi has the wisdom to analyse the situation and accept what is desirable for the welfare of her daughters. She worries about their future and marriage. She is sure that Aru and Charu would find a right profession. Her worries ruminate around Aru’s outlook towards marriage institution. “But I do worry, I have begun to worry about their marriage. I know they will stand on their own feet, I have no fears for Aru and Charu, not on that count. But marriage? Will Aru learn that love, however brief, however unsatisfactory, however tragic, is necessary? Will she realize that without that kind of a companionship some part of us withers and dies? (169) Shashi Deshpande brings to light the life of women in India not with a pessimistic approach towards marriage institution. As a writer she indicates the hurdles which hinder the progress of women in Indian society and leaves her readers to decide what is correct and what is incorrect. Sumi’s thoughts stand as a proof for Shashi Deshpande’s optimistic approach towards marriage institution.

Sumi closely monitors the changes in Aru. Aru has altered her relationship with Kalyani. Aru and Kalyani become close and Aru exclaims at the sight of her grandmother’s swollen feet which makes it impossible for her to wear her slippers. Kalyani convinces Aru that her swollen feet is due to the rise in body heat. Aru chides Kalyani for not telling the fact to her and she likes to call Ramesh. She sinks down gratefully into the chair with the help of Aru. Aru gets her a basin of cold water to immerse her feet in. Kalyani lets her feet down into the water with an audible sigh and tells Aru,
‘You shouldn’t pamper an old woman like this, Aru,” she says when the girl gets her a cup of coffee.

‘Why not?’

‘What will I do when you go away?’

‘I’m not going anywhere, Amma’.

‘Of course you will. Daughters don’t belong All three of you birds will fly away to your own nests.’ (198)

Kalyani playfully inculcates the idea that she needs to leave her house after her marriage. It is a custom in Indian families to tell the fact now and then to prepare the girls to get ready for a new life after their marriage. But Aru’s response to Kalyani’s playful, tender words is serious with an intent look. When Kalyani speaks again, she avoids her words. Kalyani convinces her by telling, “You can’t stop living because someone else has got hurt” (198). She refers to the life of Kalyani and Sumi but Aru’s words shocks them. Aru does not want to ignore the sentiment of Kalyani who never speaks of life. But she says with a firm voice, “No, Amma, but I can take care that I don’t hurt the same way” (198). Kalyani, Goda and Ramesh never let Sumi to forget about the marriage of her daughters. Both Sumi and Aru are surprised at the enthusiasm of Kalyani when she speaks about marriage. Sumi worries that the bitter memories of childhood will ever stay with them. Charu asks Kalyani to give one of her photographs and horoscope to Goda to seek an alliance for her. Goda understands the fun in her words and laughs. She says that she cannot take her horoscope until Aru gets married. She answers that she has no patience to wait and asks her sister Aru to get married soon. Aru replies, “I’m never going to get married” (76). Aru says nothing and looks at Kalyani. Kalyani turns her face
as she cannot withstand the pressure created by Aru. Her looks states her hatred for marriage.

Kalyani presents Aru diamond earrings on her eighteenth birthday and Aru is surprised. She refuses to accept her gift as she shows that she is not the one and only granddaughter of Kalyani. She asks Kalyani, “What will I do with them, anyway?” (226) Kalyani replies, “Wear them. Put them away. Keep them for your children. Sell them. Make something else out of them. Do what you want. They’re yours now” (226). Kalyani narrates that the earrings were worn by her mother every day. Kalyani’s grandfather got them for Kalyani’s mother when she got married. The earrings were too large for her mother to wear after her marriage. She started wearing them later. Aru understands the importance of the earrings and asks the reason for having presented them to her. Kalyani says, “I think-I hope-my mother would have been proud of you. I was a great disappointment to her. Not only because I was a girl, but because-because-oh, maybe because I was none of those things would she have liked her daughter to be. I was not beautiful, not smart…” (227).

Kalyani feels a sense of comfort whenever she speaks with Aru. She adds that she has failed to give pleasure to her mother and get no pleasure from her daughters too. They lived like caged birds without a breathing space. Manorama also failed to show care and concern for Kalyani’s daughters. Manorama was disappointed as she had Kalyani as her heir. When Kalyani gave birth to Sumi and Premi, she said, “Daughters again” (227). Kalyani felt an absolute joy after Aru’s birth. She adds, “And when you were born, a daughter I wondered how she could have been so blind. Now when I look at you, my three granddaughters, especially at you, I think- I’m luckier than my mother. She’s the
unlucky one who didn’t know to enjoy her children and grandchildren” (227). The friendship buds between Kalyani and Aru who belong to two different generations is fine and appeasing. Neither Manorama, mother of Kalyani, nor her granddaughters Sumi and Premi had taken steps to communicate with each other. Shashi Deshpande skillfully portrays the distinction between these two pairs and the healthy relationship between Kalyani and Aru is understood vividly. It is a positive change and Shashi Deshpande knows that any positive change in the family relationship will offer pleasure and contentment to her readers.

Aru refuses to go to Premi’s house during holidays. She prefers computer class and joins in a women activist group. Devaki asks Sumi to stop her. Sumi articulates her inability and adds, “Once you destroy the hierarchical structure in a family, the whole thing goes to pieces” (200). Aru is unaware of Sumi’s uneasiness. She finds a proper frame for her feelings. To be a part of a group gives her a sense of getting somewhere. She speaks about “Women and the Law” with Surekha who is a lawyer. She enquires her about her family position.

‘And your mother isn’t interested in divorce’.
‘No, ma’am’
‘You live your grandparents. No problem there?’
‘No, ma’am.’
‘They’re willing to have you?’
‘Yes, ma’am.’
‘And your mother has a job now?’
Yes, Ma’am.’
‘All right, then, Arunthathi, what’s your problem? What is it that you want?’ (203)

Aru needs justice in her personal life and it seems impossible. It is easy to stand in public holding up a placard asking for justice for someone else. Aru hesitates to give her the right answer. She understands and asks, “You want your rights as a daughter, I guess. Is that it? Well, you do have rights as a daughter. It’s your father’s duty and responsibility to maintain you and your sisters until you are married. And your mother, too, of course” (204). Surekha says that Aru is lucky as she lives in a modern age. She adds that Manu has not mentioned any duty to maintain a daughter. The duty is only towards a wife, parents and sons. Aru likes to approach court against her father and she seeks her help. But the lawyer says, “To sue your father for maintenance? That comes under Family Courts—you don’t need a lawyer. But I’ll give you some advice. Free. Don’t do it” (204).

Gopal has no property and hence she is advised to remain silent. She answers, “But all these other people helping us—that’s charity. I don’t want charity. It’s not fair” (204). Surekha advises, “Nothing is fair in this world, you have to learn and accept that” (204). Aru is asked to come again. She goes again and again and she even helps her when her assistant Nagma stays away because of the flu. Even then Surekha never slackens in her hostility to Aru’s case. She once says, “It’s a pity that there’s no property dispute in your case. The law takes property very seriously. Now, don’t look so scornful. Property is an absolute fact. Unlike emotions. Just imagine how it would be if the law were to take those into account? Whose emotions would it give weight to? Your father’s? Your mother’s? Yours? (205)
When Surekha meets Gopal, he accepts his nervousness about the misunderstanding with the students. She calls herself as a feminist and she adds that she is always on the side of women when rules are against women. She aspires that things have to change. Gopal replies, “I don’t understand how feminists can argue that a man is responsible for his family. If you reject patriarchy, you must reject all these things based on patriarchy too” (214). Gopal asks her whether she meets him to get justice for the wronged woman. The reply by Surekha states the nature, temperament and good will of Aru towards her mother. “No I’m here to see Aru’s father. I wanted to see the man who could walk out on such a daughter” (214). Gopal is stunned by the direct attack. He replies that the children do not need him anymore. She is shocked and surprised by his mind-set and outlook towards life. “They don’t need you? You’re fooling yourself. Is there any moment when our need for one another ceases? (215) The efforts of Aru from all perspectives is an invited change in India.

Aru who takes care of Sumi cries for parting Sumi when she gets a job in a boarding school. But she is consoled by her mother. Sumi feels comfortable and good to think that Kalyani and Shripati, their grandparents are with Aru and Charu. Sumi holds her daughter Aru close and tries to soothe her. Though Kalyani has love for her daughters she does not know to show it out. Her situation blinded her and her motive was then to act as per Shripati’s wish. Though the communication is cut, she fine tuned her family to the taste of her husband. In her anxiety she forgot everything including showing her love for her daughters. After Aru’s entry she learns to live with happiness.

Kalyani slumps to the floor after hearing the sad demise of her daughter Sumi and Shripati. She is afraid to think about their demise at the crucial juncture. She is left
alone with three small children to be taken care of. But Aru rushes to Kalyani and says, “Amma, I’m here, I’m your daughter, Amma, I’m your son, I’m here with you, Amma, I’m here…” (233). When Gopal and Ramesh struggle with the formalities of two accidental deaths, Aru takes charge at home doing all the things that have to be done. All the members of the family have been stunned into immobility. But Aru “…has the concentration of a rope-walker, holding the weight of her grief in her two hands, not as if it is a burden, but to balance herself” (234). Shashi Deshpande concludes, “Sumi has been mourned as a daughter, a mother, a sister and friend-but not as a wife” (236). The apt choice of words by Shashi Deshpande is razor-sharp and penetrates deep into the heart of the readers. The will of Shripati is read. He wrote as, “Kalyani, daughter of Vithalrao and Manoramabai”. Even in the will Shripati has not accepted Kalyani as his wife. The plight of Sumi and Kalyani are the same. They are unrecognized by their husbands. Even at her at the verge of death Sumi says, “Aru won’t trust any of us, she’ll organize her own wedding” (234). The suffering of Sumi or her mother never let Sumi to lose hope in marriage institution. Sumi’s words stay behind in the minds of the readers.

The words of the will of Shripati have given Kalyani the courage and she restores her peace and harmony. The words of Shripati have not hurt her but strengthened her. When they bid a send off to Gopal, Aru controls herself and moves away from her father’s arms. She says, echoing her grandmother, “Yes, Papa, you go, we’ll be all right, we’ll be quite all right, don’t worry about us” (246). Aru and Kalyani decide to lead a life without the support of Gopal though they never discuss their future plan. Gopal leaves them and after a moment he looks back once and sees the two women Aru and Kalyani standing “…the two faces, one old and the other so young, linked by a curious
resemblance. It is the steady watchful look on their faces, the smile of encouragement they have for him that makes them look alike” (246). Aru’s confidence at the age of eighteen and Kalyani’s will power sow the right seeds for the rise of promising and energetic women who will rewrite the destiny of their comrades without altering the fundamentals that are considered necessary to construct a dynamic society.

Sivasankari’s Poy is translated as Deception in English. Giri passively accepts to marry Dhurga as per his mother Chellamma’s choice. Chellamma reveals to Dhurga’s parents that her elder son fell in love with a girl from the USA and he got married without informing them. She explains her unhappiness and anger about her elder son’s decision and adds that she has cut all her communication link with her elder son. Her elder son was not even informed of the sad demise of his father. His marriage stands as a hurdle in Giri’s marriage. When the marriage between Giri and Dhurga is fixed, Dhurga is asked by her mother-in-law to take care of his son. Before marriage Giri says that he feels shy to speak with women as he does not have sisters. Giri adds that his elder brother went to the USA for higher studies when he was young. The family of Giri has cut the entire link with his brother after his marriage. Giri starts writing letters to his brother only in the recent past. He feels lonely and he likes to change his mode of life after his marriage with Dhurga. He likes to refill the vacuum created by his loneliness with the help and presence of Dhurga in his house.

After marriage he longs for Dhurga’s company and never lets her to visit even her mother’s house. Dhurga is taken to her mother’s house for her first delivery as per Indian custom. Giridhar visits her daily. Dhurga refuses to stay for a few more months with her mother and returns with Giri within a fortnight. She rejects all the formality for his
second son Jaggu and stays with Giri in her house. Though Dhurga’s mother expresses her dissatisfaction, she never yields to the demands of her mother. Sivasankari precisely presents all the minute details to show their happy and prosperous life.

Giri’s mother sends them rice, pulses and savouries from the village and writes letters often. She treats Dhurga as her daughter. Dhurga feels happy about her temperament. But Giri disagrees with her statement. He says that she had neither permitted to read books nor to play or chat with his friends when he was young. Listening to music was considered as an offence by his mother. He was asked to study all the time. He plainly states that he knows no recreational activity. Dhurga persuades him to join in a sports club and asks him to listen to music. He replies that it is difficult to learn recreational activities late in life. So he spends all his time only with his wife and sons.

When he is offered a training programme by his company at England, he hates the idea. When Dhurga convinces him by stating all the advantages of attending the training programme, he asks her to accompany him. But the company offers the residence and allowance only to Giri. Moreover Dhurga is in the verge of her promotion list in her company. So she persuades her husband Giri for the six month training programme. His hesitation to leave his wife and children fills Dhurga with happiness and she motivates him to accept the chance. He deems the stay of six months abroad as a breach in their life. Giri strongly refuses to accept the words of his wife Dhurga and likes to cancel his voyage. He says that his mind agitates to part her and his two sons for six months. Dhurga encourages him to attend it and prepares him. At the same time she gathers courage to part him. She makes Giri to accept the chance with happiness as his training
would get him the promotion as Works Manager in his company. She explains the facilities that would be enjoyed by them after the training. Giri’s painful words and Dhurga’s tears speak volumes about the intimacy between them before his voyage. When Giri is persuaded by Dhurga he says, “Nālu nāḷā nī eppāṭiyō irukkaratai nā pārrkalaiṅṅu niṅaicciyā? purāpattuṅṅa nāḷ kiṭṭa varavara, eṇṇakkuḷḷa uṇṭayirukkiṅṅa tavippu! eppāṭītā uṇṇaiyum pacaṅkaḷaiyum viṭṭṭu … āru macam…kaṭavuḷḷē! eṇṇalē muṭiyatu…”(2).(Do you think I have not nитiced you for the past four days? I am totally restless as the day of journey is nearing. How can i leave you and children for six moths... Oh God!)

When his elder son Visu teases his sleeping brother by telling him that he would not be taken to the airport, Giri hugs Visu and promises him that he will not leave him to airport. Giri settles the quarrel between the two sons Visu and Jaggu and convinces his younger son Jaggu that he would take him along with others to the airport. He chides his elder son Visu for threatening him. He gladly accepts all the demands of their sons and agrees to buy all the playthings for them as per the list prepared by them. He says that Dhurga is blessed with the company of their sons. The pain and suffering of imminent separation turned into teasing and joking. Their smile and laughter encompasses a hint of pain. Before leaving he takes his father-in-law’s hand in his hands and requests him to take care of his wife and children. Giri sits in between his two sons in the cab to reach the airport. According to Dhurga he is a lovable husband, caring father and responsible head of their family.

Giri and Dhurga feel extremely happy when the flight is delayed by an hour. She broods over whether they have ever been parted for any reason in the last seven years of their married life. Though they have been living in the same place without being
separated even for a day, this unexpected one hour flight delay fills her with joy. Giri patiently answers all the questions of his two sons in the airport. Jaggu is disappointed as his father would not be with him during his birthday. But Giri convinces him and promises him that he would send toys and greeting card for his birthday. After the departure time is announced, he goes off to board in the flight. Dhurga stands in the airport with tears blurring her view of the red lights of the plane.

Dhurga stays back in their house though her father asked her to come and join them. She spends her time thinking only about Giri. After his departure Dhurga avoids food items preferred and liked by Giri. She feels sick and longs for the day of his return. She does not know to lead a normal life without Giri’s presence. The questions of her children and their anxiety about their father’s absence disturb Dhurga further. The first communication letter from Giri pacifies her and she is convinced. Dhurga understands his loneliness and writes a lengthy letter to him. But she is totally disturbed when the number of letters is minimised and she feels nervous. She cannot think of anything. She fears about his health and she manages to contact him over phone. He gets angry with her for her impatience and anxiety. She is offended and waits uncomplainingly for his letter. She receives a short note which states his hectic work schedule abroad. She chides herself and feels sorry for the inconvenience created by her. She tries to manage the questions of her children about the lack of communication from their father.

Jaggu expects greetings and toys from his father for his birthday. He is totally disappointed and pesters her mother with millions of doubts. To pacify him, she arranges a grand party. Dhurga too feels disappointed. The disappointment of her son vanishes off after the party. Dhurga tries her level to erase Jaggu’s frustration. But Dhurga is haunted
by untold fears day and night. She spends sleepless nights in tears. She does not know with whom to communicate about his silence. She is afraid and helpless. She is asked by the Manager of Giri’s company to visit him. She is informed of Giri’s absence in the training programme and his resignation letter to the company. Dhurga is shocked and controls herself. When she reaches home she feels excited to see the letter of Giri. She opens and reads the letter. Giri states that his life with Dhurga has been a failure and he longs for a good company to fulfill the vacuum. He states that he finds a fulfillment with Linda, a rich widow. She is stunned. When Giridhar asks a mutual divorce from her by stating that the life with Dhurga has been hollow and empty for him, Dhurga tries to trace the real reason for his statement. His greediness for money has corrupted him and his intension is clearly understood by Dhurga. She seeks the help of her mother-in-law. She comes to the aid of Dhurga and speaks with his elder son leaving all her anger. But all her efforts become fruitless.

Usually in Indian society daughter-in-law is viewed with hatred and the understanding between Chellamma and Dhurga is a positive one in Indian society. Usually the daughter-in-law is blamed and scolded for the mistakes of the sons. Chellamma emerges as a strong character from the beginning. She has decided to avoid his elder son as a traditional mother after his marriage with a girl from the USA. She resolves to disclose his marriage with the parents of Dhurga even before their marriage. She is magnanimous to ask Dhurga to take care of her son Giri. It is a rare incident in the Indian families. She sends the groceries every month and writes letter to Dhurga. Giri complains about her mother’s strict rules to Dhurga. But she is admired and praised by Dhurga. When she hears the long silence of Giri and his resignation, she speaks with her
elder son for the sake of Dhurga and her children. She offers her a helping hand and
money for her voyage abroad to meet his son. The proper understanding of the pain and
suffering of another woman is the needed change which fills the readers mind with
contentment.

Dhurga makes up her mind to visit Giri and leaves India with her two sons. She rejects the financial help of her father and mother-in-law. She goes to London with her two sons to show the original self of their father. The children are very excited and asking a lot of question about their father. She is surprised by the size and grandeur of Linda’s house. Giri rushes out to see her and her sons. He shouts at them for meeting him as beggars and he convinces himself by stating that Linda has gone to meet her mother who is sick. He thanks Linda for her trip to visit her mother. He promises to give the needed money for their future of her children and career. When Giri is ready to give her money, she says,

Shut up, I say! Stop that nonsense right now! Panamam panam
yārukku vēnum uṇka Linda panam?atutāṇē uṇka kaṇṇai maṇaiṭṭu uṇka
iṟuttirukku?... eṇkkō eṉ pacanaiṭṭuūṭu atileruntu eṇakku oṭṭaippaicā
vēṇā!m.(144)

(Money money. Who needs the money of your Linda? The money has hidden your eyes. I and my sons don’t need even a paisa from her property.)

Dhurga replies that she has not come to visit Giri either to beg him for her life or to get money for her children’s future but to show the real nature of the father to Visu and Jaggu. She adds that his behaviour, harsh words and temperament have explained his true
Alfred Tennyson’s poem “The Princess Part V” expresses, “Man is the hunter; woman is his game” (147). His statement becomes true in the case of Dhurga. When the real nature of Giri is revealed, she questions herself whether all his words of love are pretensions. He changes colour as per the demands of situation and life. He chooses Linda for his happy life as she is rich. If Linda has felt dissatisfaction in her life, it has meaning. She is a widow and she feels dejected. Giri’s words prove his instability and greediness. Dhurga’s bold decision is the boon of her education and career. Giri ignores the welfare and future of his children. He hopes that Dhurga will take care of his children. He never thinks about the difficulties of single parenting. He comfortably forgets the fact that for a civilisation to thrive, the family must succeed. He disregards the consequence of divorce. The separation and divorce will leave a permanent scar in the hearts, minds, and souls of children and its effect ranges from mild to harsh, from seemingly small to observably significant, and from short-term to long-term. The article of Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth entitled “A Generation at risk” states “Children in divorced families receive less emotional support, financial assistance, and practical help from their parents” (69).

There are two types of abandonment faced by married women in India. They are physical and emotional. Both would be upsetting the physical and psychological balance of the members of the family. Shripati’s is emotional abandonment and Gopal’s and Giri’s physical. Physical abandonment is quite easy to understand. The
husband moves out of the family or left the marriage and the family without any financial aid. Gopal and Giridhar’s physical abandonment leave a scar in the minds of Sumi and Dhurga and their children. Sumi vacates the house as soon as Gopal leaves the family as she is not employed. She seeks shelter under her father for some time and searches a house for them. She is scared about her financial condition and she knows for sure that she cannot leave her three daughters desperately. Sumi wonders, “If Gopal’s life is shaped by what he is what about us, the girls and me? We are here because of his actions: how does this fit in?” (27) Dhurga refuses the aid of her mother-in-law and her parents when she takes her sons to abroad to meet her husband as she is employed. The condition of educated and employed women is relatively improved in India. The other type of abandonment is emotional. Shripati’s negligence towards Kalyani belongs to this type. Kalyani’s daughters are given financial support by Shripati. This type of abandonment can be just as devastating to the family as the previous case.

Tripura Government has announced a social security pension scheme for the women who are deserted by their husbands on November 13, 2013. The Government spends Rs.26.70 crore in its annual budget which is yet another turning point in the society. Tripura government announces pension for women deserted by husband. (2013)

In the fourth United Nations Conference on Women by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) held at Beijing in 1995 MS. Hillary Clinton stated, “For too long the history of women, has been a history of silence. However it is now no longer acceptable for the world to discuss women’s rights as separate from human
rights” (Qtd. in Jandial, 211). Even though many prominent representatives raise their voice, changes in the society are like mirages in the case of many. The statement by MS. Hillary Clinton makes it clear that it stands as a problem worldwide. Both Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari present that the changes are seen only in tackling the crisis as women of present generation are economically independent but not in solving the crisis. Simone de Beauvoir states:

We must not believe, certainly, that a change in woman’s economic condition alone is enough to transform her, though this factor has been and remains the basic factor in her evolution; but until it has brought about the moral, social, cultural, and other consequences that it promises and requires, the new woman concept cannot appear. (681)

Many innocent victims are being victimised inside the marriage institution where their dreams are shattered. Many are left without money but with children to be taken care of. The condition of women compels the need for a change in the society, towards marriage and married women. If the importance is given for marriage life too in India, the innocent children will not be left to suffer.

Aru stands apart from all the evidences of psychologists. She withstands the stress created by the separation of her parents. This stress endurance and withstanding ability instill vigour in her to boom out well after the demise of her mother. Kalyani, who belongs to the previous generation, is also empowered by the substantial presence of her beloved granddaughter Aru and her ideals. Shashi Deshpande portrays Aru and Kalyani to show the change in attitude and problem-solving ability of youth as well as elders in
India at present. Her optimistic and constructive character portrayal resembles Dhurga. Dhurga bears a resemblance of Aru and Kalyani. Dhurga shows the priceless love for her family, before Giri’s departure like Kalyani who has silently lived according to her husband’s wish and has argued for Sumi’s welfare with Gopal. Dhurga’s expression of anger in the end of the novel when she walks out of Linda’s house reminds Aru’s decision. Aru boldly sends her father after her mother death out though she knows that she has to take care of her aged grandmother Kalyani and her two little sisters at the age of eighteen. Kalyani who has been a passive sufferer invigorates and reinforces herself as she is given a cause to live for. So far she has lived as a puppet without self-will. Her life was designed first by her mother Manorama and then by her husband Shripati. She breathes fresh air after she is accompanied by Aru and she finds a reason to live for the children of Sumi.

The future of Dhurga and her children are left to the imagination of the readers by Sivasankari. But *A Matter of Time* narrates the calamity, pain and confusion caused by Gopal, endurance of Sumi, steps taken by Kalyani to set the life of her daughter right and Aru’s revolt against her father Gopal. The sad demise of Sumi and Shripati is a shock to the readers where there is a lack of poetic justice. Life is not a fairy tale to punish the evil at once. Sivasankari’s novel *Poy* can be considered as a prelude to *A Matter of Time*. *Poy* ends with Dhurga’s decision to leave her husband to live with her sons. *A Matter of Time* begins after Gopal leaves the family.

A comparative study between these two works wide-opens a new outlook about the Indian society, when the changing perspectives are closely observed. It can be
concluded that the problem of leaving the family burden on women still exists though it is well-tackled by educated women. As Simone de Beauvoir states the two sexes have never shared the world fairly. Women are handicapped, though her situation is beginning to change because of her economical status. Though her rights are legally recognised in the abstract, long-standing custom prevents their full expression in her way of life.

Women are compelled by situation to take care of her abandoned children all alone. Though life stands as a burden they try to live with contentment for the sake of their children. Shashi Deshpande and Sivasankari portray the inner strength of women and their problem solving skill through Sumi, Aru, Kalyani and Dhurga and give ample scope for the readers to think with the hope that the problem may be solved when the plight of children is understood properly.