Chapter II

2. The Role of Career Women: Marriage, Sex and Trauma

In many cases, women are seen as objects of sex. Their existence is nullified by the whimsical expectations of a male-dominated society. Women are abused socially, culturally and sexually. They have not been given any importance within the household and even in marriages. They are considered slaves within the marriage bond. They have to depend on men for everything. Even though they earn money more than their counterparts, they have to adjust themselves to humiliation from their husbands. She is mostly treated as an inferior being with no soul of her own. It is this state of bitterness that makes Deshpande looks at her women characters. It is as Indira Nityanandam in “Family Relationships in Shashi Deshpande’s Small Remedies” says:

From her first novel The Dark Holds No Terrors, Shashi Deshpande has been intrigued by family relationships. Deeply ensconced in the social institution of the Indian family, each one of her novels analyses the complex web of relationships within a family [...] She is able to probe deeply into the psyche of her characters, specially the female ones, perceive the reasons for their action or inaction in specific or particular situations, their overt and covert responses to people and incidents, their ability to rethink and reconsider their opinions and attitudes—all within the confines of the family. (170)

The images employed by Deshpande in Silence are appropriate to the theme of the novel. Two recurrent images in the novel are: “a pair, of bullocks yoked together”
and “sheltering tree”, and these images explain the meaning of the novel in a subtle way. The protagonist of the novel rejects the image of traditional women like Sita, Savitri and Draupadi and admits or wonders:

No what have I to do with these mythical women? I can’t fool myself. The truth is simpler. Two bullocks yoked together... it is more comfortable for them to move in the same direction, to go in different directions would be painful; and what animal would voluntarily choose pain? (LS 11-12)

This disgust of living with a man who does not love the woman the way she expects him to do is a burning problem that educated women face in the contemporary society. But the thought of desertion by the husband unnerves Jaya for she has not yet cast off the role of a traditional Indian woman. Through Jaya’s character, Deshpande expresses an ambivalent attitude of contemporary, educated, independent-minded Indian women who can neither reconcile themselves to a new situation when their husbands ignore them and crush their ambition in life nor can they cast off their husbands, for the husband is like a sheltering tree, which they cannot afford to live without. For instance, when Mohan gets the job of his choice, Jaya never questions the means by which he gets it. She avers:

If Gandhari, who bandaged her eyes to become blind like her husband, could be called an ideal wife, I was an ideal wife too. I bandaged my eyes tightly. I did not want to know anything. It was enough for me that we moved to Bombay, that we could send Rahul and Rati to good schools,
that I could have the things we needed ... decent clothes, a fridge, a gas connection, travelling first class. And, there-was enough for Mohan to send home to his father- for Sudha’s fees, Vasant’s clothes and Sudha’s marriage. (LS 61-62)

The novel, aptly called *Silence*, depicts the plight of an educated Indian woman. The significance of the novel depends on how far the reader is able to realize the situation and go along with the author in deciphering its meaning. Indira Bhatt in “*That Long Silence*: A Study” observes:

Shashi Deshpande in her novel *That Long Silence* on one level presents the condition of the woman in Indian society—her role-model—and how the different types of women act out their roles with their silence. The title emphasizes the silence that the protagonist Jaya wishes to break and to search her own self, her wife-role and her real individual self. At another level, she examines the role of Sita and Gandhari and Maitreyee, at still another level, it is the modern convent-educated English-speaking woman who gropes into the darkness of life—the dissatisfaction with her role-model in marriage and her agony over her own acceptance, though unconsciously, of the two standards for man and woman in society—the two-language formula of the Sanskrit drama. Sanskrit for the man and Prakrit for the woman. (156)
Further, Indira Bhatt observes:

Jaya on the other hand reacts differently. Her whole life revolved around the wants of her husband. Now that he does not want anything she is at a loss. The two are as if in aranyakas like Rama and Sita. But she is not a Sita and cannot be a Sita. Here they are in her Dada’s house, what for her is a home-coming. Significantly, this home-coming makes her take stock of her life, to review her life, examine her inner self and her relationship with Mohan. So far she was like the leg of a compass, all her life arranged on the circumference of Mohan’s life and his activities. But now she no longer wants to silently revolve around Mohan. As she has given up the newspaper column “Seeta,” so she wants to give up her traditional role-model of life. (157)

Jaya has a contradictory role to play in Silence. She is basically a modern woman rooted in tradition. Her husband, Mohan, is a traditionalist, rooted in customs. To Mohan, a woman sitting before the fire, waiting for her husband to arrive and eat hot food is the strength of a woman. To Jaya, being modern, it is nothing but a sheer despair. Due to differences in their attitude, their marital life grows shaky and gloomy. It becomes more of a compromise than love. It is based on social fear rather than on mutual need of each other. Mohan married her because he wanted a wife who was well educated and cultured. He made up his mind to get married to Jaya when he saw her speaking fluently and sounding so much like a girl. He tells Jaya:
You know Jaya, the first day I met you at your Kamukaku’s house, you were talking to your brother, Dinkar, and somehow you sounded so much like that girl. I think it was at that moment that I decided I would marry you. (LS 90)

Jaya used to be talkative before her marriage to Mohan, but after marriage she experiences a lack of communication. There is no conversation between Jaya and Mohan. This lack of communication is reflected not only in her married life but also in her social life too. Her books and stories lack anger and emotion. Her writings are rejected by the publishers. In the end, when Mohan angrily walks out of the house, she feels that she has failed in her role as a wife. She recalls the tradition of act and retribution : “An act and retribution – they followed each other naturally and inevitably” (LS 128). Silence explores the problems of female self expression through a career. Saru in Terrors and Indu in Shadows are also successful, emancipated women with fulfilling careers. Deshpande “shows that in reality they have not yet emotionally extricated themselves from patriarchal impositions, both direct and indirect. Obsessed as she is by the role of ideal home-maker and self-sacrificing wife, Jaya has yet attempted to create a space for herself through her writing. Jaya’s attempts to find her own voice as a writer is turned into a significant depiction of the forces – external and internal – conditioning the whole process of women’s writing” (Roy, Patterns of Feminist 123). It is as Betty Friedan in The Feminine Mystique observes : “Career meant more than job. It seemed to mean doing something, being somebody yourself, not just existing in and through others” (26).
**Terrors** is also the story of Saru and her convulsions and conflicts. She has no parental love. She has had her education much against her mother’s will as she has sense of reasoning and questioning. As she grows up, resentment and hatred drive her to leave home and pursue education in a medical college and fall in love with a man and marry him much against the warnings of her mother. At first Manu, Saru’s choice, seems to be a means of taking her away from the insecurity that she felt in her home. Initially, with Manu she felt love as a firing passion. She admits: “I was hungry for Love. Each act of sex was a triumphant assertion of our love, of my being loved, of my being wanted” (DT 35). Her marriage to Manu begins to crumble when she becomes a famous doctor and independent woman of high repute in her profession. And as a result, Manu feeling inferiority and jealousy begins to assault her bodily during night. The financial ascendance of Saru also makes him feel impotent and as a result he desires to exhibit his potency and masculinity through sexual assault / bodily harm upon Saru; which for him, becomes an assertion of his manhood leading to a sort of abnormality—during day he is a cheerful, normal human being and a loving husband turning into a rapist at night. It terrifies and humiliates Saru. She begins to feel disenchantment and imbalance as separation becomes inevitable. As a result of an acute confusion, she admits:

... The dream, the nightmare, whatever it was, continued, changing now, like some protean monster, into the horror of rape. This was not to be death by strangulation; it was a monstrous invasion of my body. I tried to move, twisting my body, wriggling under the weight that pinned it down. It was impossible. I was pinioned to a position of abject surrender of myself. I began, in sheer helplessness, to make small whimpering
sounds, piteous cries. The small pains merged all at once into one large one. And still the body above mine, hard and tense, went on with its rhythmic movements. The hands continued their quest for new areas of pain. Now the horror of what was happening to me was lost in the fierce desire to end it. I could not, would not bear it. I began to fight back, hopelessly, savagely.

And suddenly, when I thought I could bear it no longer, the body that was not mine relaxed. The release was so abrupt, it soaked me into an unfamiliar faintness. When the syncope wore off, I realized I was free. There was no weight pinning me down now. But I could not move. It was just no exhaustion, though there was that too. It was more as if my mind had deserted my shamefully bruised body, disowning it, making it insensate:

And then -the two came together, I knew where I was and what had happened. Panic and sensation came back simultaneously. I turned my head slightly, fearfully, and saw him beside me, snoring softly. No more a stranger, but my husband. (DT 11-12)

In the case of Manu, the question by a reporter from a woman’s magazine to him, “How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?” (DT 200) makes him more conscious of his inferiority. That night he attacks and physically assaults her in bed. The nightmarish incident is repeated and Saru wakes up:
to darkness and an awareness of fear. Panic then pain. There it was for the second time, what I had just lulled myself into believing was just a nightmare. The hurting hands, the savage teeth, the monstrous assault of a horribly familiar body. And above me, a face I could not recognize. Total non-comprehension, complete bewilderment, paralysed me for a while. Then I began to struggle. But my body, hurt and painful, could do nothing against the fearful strength which overwhelmed me. My mind, fluttering, threw itself despairingly on the walls of unbelief and came back staggering bruised and spent. And then, mercifully, the end, the face still hovering mine, changing as the body relaxed, becoming the familiar known one of my husband’s. The face and body both are moving away to become a familiar huddled shape by my side. (DT 112)

The regular violation of her body by the man she once loved and the hypocrisy maintained by him make Saru feel ill about everything. She detests the very act of sex. Her relationship with Boozie and Padmakar Rao is a temporal one as she knows: “Love? Romance? Both, I knew too well were illusions, and not relevant to my life anyway. And the code word of our age is neither love nor romance, but sex. Fulfillment and happiness came, not through love alone, but sex. And for me sex was now a dirty word” (DT 133). Saru’s sexuality is killed by her husband’s rape and now she is a metaphor of “a dark, damp, smelly hole” (DT 29).

In Silence, the dreams of Jaya’s childhood to change the ascribed situation of woman resulting in achieving her goals are shattered by the environment, the
surroundings and above all by the society which imposes all sorts of restrictions on women. She is absolutely helpless and unable to do anything to improve her situation. She longs to be called an ideal wife. She revolts in silence contrasting her husband’s views on women. She says: “He saw strength in the woman sitting silently in front of the fire, but I saw despair. I saw a despair so great that it would not voice itself. I saw a struggle so bitter that silence was the only weapon. Silence and surrender” (LS 36). In her physical relationship with Mohan, she remains silent. She has to tolerate everything. She admits: “The emotion that governed my behaviour to him, there was still the habit of being a wife, of sustaining and supporting him” (LS 98). Their physical relationship always ends up with Mohan’s question whether he has hurt her. It shows a forced relationship and not a natural one.

Jaya, even though married to Mohan, suffers from isolation. She feels lonely. Her husband cannot understand her feelings. And as a result, she is torn from within. Deshpande comments on her married life as follows:

A pair of bullock yoked together… a clever phrase, but can it substitute for reality? A man and a woman married for seventeen years. A couple with two children. A family somewhat like the one caught and preserved for posterity by the advertising visuals I so loved. But the reality was only this. We were two persons. A man. A woman. (LS 8)

Jaya accepts marriage as a natural consequence of growing up - “it was not love, but marriage that was the destiny waiting for us” (LS 91). When Jaya’s marriage with Mohan is arranged, the issues that are discussed are the girl’s complexion and education (the first
is a handicap, she is dark, the second is an advantage, she is convent educated and knows English), and the boy’s family and his job. Mohan is an engineer and that, according to her brother, is the most important thing. Jaya’s mother disapproves of the family, which is an orthodox, conventional one. At no stage are the likings and desires of the woman important. And in any case for Jaya, as for Mini in Shadows, marriage is a getting away from her present world of dependence. Moreover, no dowry has been demanded. Jaya is educated, unlike Mini who is no good at studies. Mohan is young, handsome and well-employed which Mini’s much-older and coarse husband (Shadows) is not. Instead, he has a big house and family wealth. The decision, however, rests with the male of the species. Jaya is aware that the decision had nothing to do with her “the truth is that he had decided to marry me, I had only to acquiesce” (LS 94).

Jaya hopes that closeness will come gradually but this is not the case for Mohan. For him, it was extremely simple, “we were married, we were husband, and wife, so everything according to him, was permissible”. In a way, it works out and after an initial fumbling things fall into place. Jaya experiences a sense of fulfillment, “all those vague longings, all those suppressed thoughts, all those whispers, the hurts, even the things we had so blithely called love and romance. It was then that I had discovered what it was all about - the songs, the poems, the stories” (LS 24)

The marriage is entered into by both parties with a sense of self-preservation, self-promotion and self-realisation. Love is a later consideration. And as Jaya discovers later, sensual memories have a certain coldness about them. Emotional and intellectual connections persist more strongly. In fact, they acquire a life of their own totally
independent of the physical relationship as does her relationship with Kamat. Mohan and Jaya have built a life together, have produced two children and yet their wave lengths are different.

Mohan’s proprietial approach can trace a resemblance with other relationships within marriage - with Akka’s in Shadows and Mira’s in Vine-but there the issues of class, educational levels and social contexts intervene to make them more traumatic and painful. While Akka is a twelve year old child bride living at an earlier date than her granddaughter Indu, and is literally owned by her thirty year old husband with physical lust being prioritised, Mira’s case is somewhat different. She is romantically desired by her husband to whom it never occurs that she may have a will of her own. The male feels privileged simply by disguising his desire for the young beautiful girl in an aura of romance. There is also a difference in the attitude of the two wives. Akka lives in accordance with the conventional code and ends up by having full rights over the territory of the household to the extent of denying his mistress the right to see him on his deathbed. Her inheritance is the reward she gets for her adherence to propriety.

Marriage is a bond to many a woman, but it is not necessarily the same kind of bond. Some are protected by it, some created their own space, others are irked by the dependence and the bondage it imposes on them. Yet, marriage is valued by society because widowhood circumscribes a woman’s life and is considered inauspicious. In Silence, the domestic help values her mangalsutra realising fully that she is supporting a burden. Her husband is an alcoholic and is no help at all. He is not a wage-earner. But all the same he protects her from the gaze of the others. ‘A husband is a sheltering tree’ is a
refrain in *Silence* used in several different ways (LS 73, 167, 173). Sheltering trees protect, insulate and isolate. They do not allow anything to grow beneath them. They act as a wall between the self and the world. Jaya experiences all these feelings and emotions as she sees her mother being widowed by her father’s death, and she herself feels inhibited by Mohan’s dreams, which imprison her and reduce her area of freedom. The job she had wanted to take up, the baby she had wanted to adopt, the anti-price campaign she had wanted to join, none of these were actions undertaken or completed. Yet when Mohan goes away for sometime and she, overcome by fears of his having done away with himself or having abandoned her, is terribly shaken, “Was it impossible for me to relate to the world without Mohan? A husband is like a sheltering tree, How would people have behaved towards her if they had realised that she was an abandoned wife, with pity? Contempt? Or, most frightening thought, without the barrier Mohan had raised between me and the other men?” (LS 167).

Jaya’s name keeps on changing according to the wishes of others. She is known by two names: Jaya and Suhasini. Jaya, which means victory, is given by her father, when she was born, and Suhasini, the name given after her marriage means a “soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman” (LS 16). However, both the names symbolize the traits of her personality. The former symbolizes victory and the latter submission. Suhasini steeped in tradition and Jaya trying to break free from the shackles of tradition. The result is a fragmented self, vacillating between two personalities.

Jaya is Suhasini and also Seeta. Both Suhasini and Seeta are as she says “the many selves wanting to be discovered each self attached like a Siamese twin to a self of
another person, neither able to exist without the other” (LS 69). It is as Ram Sharma in “Writing From the Margins : A Study of Shashi Deshpande’s That Long Silence” observes : “She is to live neither as ‘Suhasini’ or ‘Jaya’ nor as ‘Seeta’ or ‘Anti-Kusum’. She is to ride but in fragments” (87). Shraddah Dubey in “The Journey From Silence to Eloquence in Shashi Deshpande’s That Long Silence” also says that “Her renaming as ‘Suhasini’ is a symbolic obliteration of her past identity and submission to that of her husband’s by letting herself to be straitjacketed into the slot of submissive wife” (115).

There are, perhaps always, at least two selves in a woman, one that wants freedom, the other that wants to belong. One of the two has to yield. For Jaya, her married name, Suhasini, indicates the presence of the ‘other’. Suhasini had taken birth at the moment of her marriage and had followed the cultural stereotype of being a ‘good’ wife. But as she finds her own fate, finds self-expression as a writer, experiences anger at social and gender injustice, she begins to cast off the role of Suhasini, which is in any case beginning to crack. She was a wife, a possession, an object owned and expected to fall in line. As Jaya distances herself from this image, she begins to see her:

The woman I had seen in the mirror the day of our wedding - a woman who had not seemed to be me, who had taken the burden of wifehood off me. A humourless, obsessive person. But Mohan’s eyes, as he spoke of her, were agonised, the eyes of a man who had lost a dear one. Suhasini was dead, yes, that was it, she was the one Mohan was mourning, she’d walked into the sea at last. No, the fact was that I’d finally done it. I’d killed her. (LS 121)
Jaya is not satisfied with her marriage to Mohan. She always tries to keep a balance between her and Mohan. She admits: “Ours has been a delicately balanced relationship, so much so that we have been stripped off bits of ourselves to keep the scales on an even keel” (LS 7). Commenting on the married life of Jaya, M. Rajeshwar in “The Trauma of a House-Wife: A Psychological Study of Shashi Deshpande’s That Long Silence” says:

Rumination on the traumatic event, insomnia and recurrent nightmares and dreams, feelings of detachment and disorientation, adverse somatic reaction and relative lack of control over one’s actions are the readily available tools of the psychic apparatus which are pressed into service in Jaya’s case. Everyone of the defence strategies that Jaya resorts to, emanates from, is structured around and finally returns to the single traumatic event of the sudden disintegration of her conjugal life. (52)

In marriages, there are no role models to survive in life without a husband. A single woman is constrained in many ways. A widow is limited in her social sphere. A woman abandoned by her husband has no justification for living. Jaya feels that nobody has bothered to tell her what to do when a marriage is over (LS 138). Marriages, like any other human relationships, can be over.

Deshpande has picked up the pet Indian theme of rise of the status of the wife in the society. The matter almost comes to the boiling point when Saru addresses a group of girls and out of sheer anguish, because of the intolerance of the society, says the following words:
Listen girls, she would say, whatever you do, you won’t be happy, not really, until you get married and have children. That’s what they tell us? And we have to believe them because no one has proved it wrong till now. But if you want to be happily married, there’s one thing you have to remember. Have you girls seen an old fashioned couple walking together? Have you noticed that the wife always walks a few steps behind her husband? That’s important, very important, because it is symbolic of the truth. A wife must always be a few steps behind her husband. If he’s an MA, you should be a BA. If he’s 5’4” tall, you should not be more than 5’3” tall. If he is earning five hundred rupees, you should never earn more than four hundred and ninety-nine rupees. That’s the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage. Don’t even try to reverse the doctor-nurse, executive-secretary, principal-teacher role. It can be traumatic, disastrous. And, I assure you, it is not worth it. He’ll suffer, you’ll suffer and so will the children, women’s magazines will tell you that a marriage should be an equal partnership. That’s nonsense, rubbish. No partnership can ever be equal. It will always be unequal. But take care that it’s unequal in favour of your husband. If the scales tilt in your favour, god help you, both of you. (DT 137)

Saru in Terrors marries a person who is not from her caste. Her mother predicts an unhappy married life. She says: “You won’t be happy with him. I know you won’t. A man of different caste, different community… what will you two have in common?” (DT 90). Indu in Shadows also realizes: “If you mean, is it the right person for me, yes it is.
But marriage… it makes one so dependent. I don’t know about men, but…” (RS 57). It is because as Promilla Kapur observes in *Love, Marriage and Sex*:

> The whole structure of the society is disorganized because the society in general and man in particular have not changed as such. Their attitude is also somewhat ambivalent. In their minds the picture of an ideal woman is more or less that of a traditional woman. At the same time, they do wish and expect their wives to be smart and cultured. (270)

A different kind of separation takes place in Saru’s life in *Terrors*. Marriage for her is in direct defiance of her parents’ wishes, an opting out of a daughterly role and a goodbye to the past that holds her responsible for her brother’s death. It is a new beginning with the man she loves. When she had entered medical college, it had been a ‘kind of rebirth’ (DT 95), and marriage to Manu had implied a total rebellion.

Saru is a doctor and in some ways very different from Indu, Jaya and Urmi, women who carry their emotions with them. She is dismissive of emotions and leaves them for Manu to handle, who is anxious and concerned. She is not afraid of sex because as a doctor she is well aware of the body and its needs. And she is able to tide over the pain of breaking away from her parents. She confesses: “Suffering? Painful? I was impatient with the words because they meant nothing to me. After my last confrontation with my parents, I had already detached myself from them” (DT 39). Yet, she experiences a sense of fear, a ‘trapped feeling’ inside marriage. Unlike Urmi, she doesn’t withhold. She gives all of her self. She is instantly aroused and has an “infinite capacity for loving and giving, with a passionate desire to be absorbed by the man I (She) loved
For her, sex and love are two aspects of one another and they go together. Saru is one of those women who are constantly fighting against the social constraints of womanhood. Her self has been constructed by a series of rebellions and incidents – her mother’s indifference, her father’s passive acceptance of his wife’s decisions, the preferential treatment given to her brother, Dhruva, sibling jealousy, the fight against the stereotype of a fair complexioned woman, the need for independence and the desire to prove herself – these are the forces behind her conscious and subconscious drives. Over the years, her husband has lost his attractiveness (along with his ambition). And as Saru talks about him to Madhav, her father’s guest-tenant, she is suddenly struck by the thought “maybe I’m the one who’s taken it away from him” (DT 48). But the conflict between power and submission, between possession and individuality, is best worked out between Manu and Saru. Saru has qualities that society terms masculine, while in Manu, they are recessive and find an expression through his subconscious sadism. In fact, the novel takes on the seventies debate about sexual equality and the notions of femininity and masculinity. These are then placed in the Indian cultural context where feminism is constructed through myth and traditional role models, defined by rituals and social customs and located in the biological functions of the body. Those who are able to move out of the prescribed patterns of behaviour do so primarily on the basis of education. Indu’s father insists that she be sent to an English language school, Jaya finds a husband on the basis of her convent education and Saru is able to step out of the female models because she is good at her studies. While Indu and Jaya are both journalists and Urmi a lecturer, Saru moves out of the traditional female professions of writing and teaching to take on the new middle class profession of medicine. Her work gives her an immense
amount of confidence and distances her from the romantic. She believes that it is easy to cut the umbilical cord and separate the baby from the mother, not realizing that lineages and memories have a habit of persisting even in hostile circumstances. As she grows in her profession, she feels inches taller. Looking back at her marriage from a distance, now that she is back in her father’s house, she begins to feel a sense of guilt that goes on mounting even as her anger increases. She is angry with her mother for not accepting her back, for pushing her out of her life even at the time of her death; with her father for not having supported her; with her husband for his failed ambitions.

Saru tries to imitate the other girls but is conscious of her plainness. Her real life experience of an invisible plain self is contrasted very strongly with her dreams and fantasies where she recalls:

I was all female and dreamt of being the adored and chosen of a superior, superhuman male. . . . There was no ‘I’ then, not as yet, craving for recognition, satisfaction. The craving, which when it came, was always to be accompanied by a feeling of guilt if the ‘I’ dared to overreach a male, as if I was doing something that took away shreds of my femininity. (DT 53)

The social definitions of a woman’s role – to marry, to bear children and be faithful to her husband, to remain in the territory defined for her, to be marked by dress and jewellery as child-wife or widow – do not encourage women to look upon themselves as social equals. Men are looked up to and treated as wiser and mature than women and seen as having a better knowledge of the world. It is this which leads to the protective
father-lover relationship so much desired and the clear division of labour. But reality is
different from the prescribed code, and economic responsibilities are increasingly shared
in modern life. Indu writes for a living as does Jaya to supplement the family income.
Urmi works and Saru is a doctor and her earnings pay for the family holidays and other
material luxuries. Even the poor and the illiterate women support their families and their
husbands, who are often unemployed and alcoholic. Despite this sharing of
responsibilities, women are still viewed as dependents. Vanaa has a job but her
relationship with Harish is based upon a total submission to his wishes. The intensity of
adoration or love may render such a submission palatable but the fact remains that this
docility seems to be a necessary condition of material happiness.

Saru, unlike Urmi and Vanaa, and even unlike Indu, has constantly lived between
fantasy and reality. In fact, she has never led her hold on reality. Her fantasies are based
on the hope for the miracles of being loved and wanted. Saru is not feminine in the
conventional sense. She has desires other than the ones labeled ‘feminine’. She recalls
that her mother used to say that she was an ugly girl. She has to stand in front of a mirror
and repeat the words, ‘I am ugly’, in order to define herself through these negative
images. The constant reminders to dress properly, to hold her body together make her
feel that growing up is shameful. She resents the exclusion imposed upon her during
menstruation, an exclusion which announces her physical state to the world, exposing her
in a way no indecency would have done. Not being allowed to enter the kitchen or the
puja room, sleeping on a straw mat, using a separate cup and plate, not being allowed to
touch anything for fear of pollution, all these practices push her into a rebellion, making
her ‘want to rage’. Saru resents both her mother and the fact of womanhood for the two
are synonymous for her. She tells her, “If you’re a woman, I don’t want to be one” (DT 63). And then, one day, she sees a woman who looked different from the others, “somehow superior to all the other women there” (DT 140) and drew the conclusion that the woman was superior because she was a doctor. From that point onwards, it becomes an obsession with her. The medical profession seems a possible escape route from the negative image imposed upon her. She reinvents herself-first by going to college, then falling in love and getting married to a man of her choice. Saru wants to meet the demands of life on a more realistic plane. She is not charmed by Manu and his friends. They are all artistically inclined and apparently sensitive men. But, their facility with words is a little too high flown and abstract for her, “Words, words, words .... Sometimes they can obscure the very meaning of life” (DT 153). The women soon realise that for them the choices are limited. It is not possible to pursue an artistic career and at the same time satisfy the requirements of domesticity. Vidya settles for domesticity because her husband and his family disapprove of a stage career (DT 156).

Individual friendships are the first casualty of married life. One moves from friendship to a common group of acquaintances, neighbours, relatives and enters into a phase of routine socialising. Saru feels comfortable in her workday world and with her male colleagues. She gets along well with her boss, Boozie, who later loans her the money to run her own clinic. But friendships do not continue as friendships. Boozie may exude an air of masculinity, but in fact, he is a hollow man, moving as he does from affair to affair like a deteriorating work of art. Padmakar is a different kind of man, the very opposite of Boozie. In worldly terms, he is a failure. He has opted out of the rat race practices in a poor district and is engaged in researching on intestinal diseases. But
in the background is his failed marriage, where he has pushed his wife into the shadows. Instead, he seeks Saru in order to share his medical discoveries. He threatens to become a habit dangerously close to an emotional attachment. Friendships with men, no matter how intellectual or innocent they may be, fall outside the socially permitted range for married women.

Both femininity and the rejection of femininity begin for Saru with the body. The ugliness and the inhibitions have to be fought against, and the result is the realisation of romantic love and knowledge of the pleasures of the body. But the will and self-analysis that allow her to be free of the childhood inhibitions and frameworks also lead her to desist falling into the trappings of the conventional meek wife, submitting and surrendering her will to her husband. This state can only be achieved through a split in her own personality, demanding almost a schizophrenic existence. The exercise of will, independence of thought, her higher earning capacity, the need to take professional decisions to diagnose and treat - all these abilities and habits of mind cannot be waived aside once she is back home. Saru is sensitive to this conflict between the social expectations from women and women’s individual strengths. She sees the reaction on her daughter Renu’s face. Somehow, a free, independent-minded woman disrupts the idea of a happy family. The relationship of man and woman within marriage, in order to be happy, demands inequality. Saru recalls: “but now I know it was there, it began this terrible thing that has destroyed our marriage. I know this to that the human personality has an infinite capacity for growth. And so the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps, the something that made me. Inches taller made him
inches shorter. He had been the young man and I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband” (DT 42). Saru undergoes terrible sufferings.

Silence presents the stereotypes and myths about Indian femininity through various peripheral characters. In the beginning of the novel, the character of Kusum is portrayed as a counter-foil to Jaya, who mirrors the darker regions of her psyche. She is a touchstone against which Jaya tests and ensures her sanity and normalcy. Kusum, carrying an aura of defeat about her (LS 23), represents a way of life in which women are made keenly aware of the low position they occupy in their society. Deshpande’s control over her narrative, however, does not allow it to become a sociological rant. Kusum’s mother was constantly burdened with child rearing. Her world centred round her youngest, the baby on her lap, while the rest of her kids ran around in wild abandon, unkempt, dirty, unfed. Kusum is later on adopted by her aunt Vanitamami, but her existence in the new family also remains a bit tentative. Passive surrender and insecurity which has been her lot in her mother’s home, pursues her in the new family too, and later on in her new home after marriage. Kusum’s madness and accidental death after having fallen into a dry well represent the lot of those women who are conditioned to succumb before submission. She epitomizes those women who submit to insults, injuries and humiliations with a stoic patience, without any complaint, as they have been trained to have an implicit faith in the virtues of patriarchy.

Jaya’s role as a creative writer is weighed in relation to what society would think of her. Particularly, Mohan wants to make Jaya think like him. In fact, Jaya, a representative of the typical Indian young woman, wants to mould herself as her husband
wills / wants. Her father also assigned a role to be a loving and affectionate girl. In her childhood, she had been brought up in a loving and affectionate manner without any responsibility. But after her marriage to Mohan, she begins to change automatically. Her anger withers away. Deshpande narrates: “she was a child who used to get angry very soon. But after her marriage she tolerated her anger. She realized that to Mohan anger made a woman ‘unwomanly’” (LS 83). When Kamat questions her why she has not expressed the anger of a woman in her writings, her answer is: “Because no woman can be angry. Have you ever heard of an angry young woman?” (LS 147). She has successfully and systematically suppressed every aspect of her personality that refuses to fit into her role as wife and mother. Jaya’s role as a short story writer is of moderate success. Although Mohan takes pride in the fact of being the husband of a writer, he strongly objects to her themes which he suspects to have strong autobiographical overtones. He says:

They will all know now, all those people who read this and know us, they will know that these persons are us, they will think I am this kind of man, they will think I am this man. How can I look anyone in the face again?

And you, how could you write these things…? (LS 143-144).

And as a result, she becomes scared of Mohan and hurting him. Deshpande writes, she has been “scarred of hurting Mohan scared of jeopardizing the only career I had, my mourning” (LS 144). So she gives up writing fiction. She settles down to write middles to newspapers, which pose no problem to anyone. “Scared of denting the façade of a happy marriage, of marring her carefully – cultivated image of perfect wife, Jaya had
compromise; she had killed all the stories seething within her, of real women and their real pain. Even the stories she continued to write in secrecy – those which were regularly rejected – had been ultimately conditioned by male authority working through an unwritten code regulating female activity” (Roy, Patterns of Feminist 124). In fact, Veena Singh in “Woman as Portrayed by the Women Novelists of India” considers Jaya as R.K. Narayan’s Savitri. Veena Singh says : “She is like R.K. Narayan’s Savitri in his novel Dark Room, who is trapped in a marriage that she can neither end nor after. But writing provides to Jaya a release from her frustration” (38). Jaya, as a writer, admits her difficulty in revealing her true self through writing. In the opening page of the novel itself she admits :

Nor I am writing a story of callous, insensitive husband and a sensitive, suffering wife. I’m writing of us. Of Mohan and me. And I know this – you can never be heroine of your own story. Self revelation is a cruel process. The real picture, the real ‘you’ never emerges. Looking for it is as bewildering as trying to know how you really look. Ten different mirrors show you ten different faces. (LS 1)

Jaya resents the role assigned to her. She cannot continue her writing as Mohan always discourages her. She is deeply distressed to know that the writer in her cannot come out because of her husband. She says :

I had known then that I hadn’t mattered to Mohan that I had written a good story, a story about a couple, a man who could not reach out to his wife except through her body. For Mohan it had mattered that people
might think the couple was us, that the man him. To Mohan, I had been no writer only an exhibitionist. (LS 144)

She did not take a risk to annoy Mohan lest that should break her marriage with Mohan. She says ironically:

Perhaps, if Mohan had been angry, if he had shouted and raged at me, if he had forbidden me to write, perhaps I would have fought him and gone on. But he had only shown me his hurt. And I had not been able to counter that. I had relinquished them instead, all those stories that had been taking shape in me because I had been scared – scared of hurting Mohan, scared of jeopardizing the only career I had. (LS 144)

Mohan has crushed both the woman and the writer in Jaya as he neither loved her nor encouraged her to write. Kamini Dinesh in “That Long Silence: The Narrator and the Narrative” admits:

As a writer Jaya proved to be a failure. Even when she fictionalizes the true to life story of Appa that has moved her, she fails to spew out her anger, her personal vision (P 147). There was the inhibited self that prevented her from speaking in her own voice but now she breaks that long silence. In telling her own story there is a candid self-revelation coloured by shades of irony, resentment and guilt as she redefines her values. Jaya begins writing her story disoriented by the shock of the realization that Mohan has abandoned her and at the thought of the
consequences and the social stigma. Her narrative is what the psychoanalyst calls ‘a talking cure’. Though there is no analyst who disrupts the narrative, memories flood in often linked by the vaguest association of ideas and each incident, a little story in itself, gives a new perspective and recreates the speaker. (84-85)

In Vine, after reading the poems of Mira, Urmi realizes the suffering of Mira, “the woman who wrote those poems in the solitude of an unhappy marriage, who died giving birth to her son at twenty-two” (BV 48). In the eyes of Urmi, Mira’s diary “is not a daily account of her routine life but a communion with herself” (BV 51). Mira’s poetry is “like a message being tapped on the wall by the prisoner in the next cell” (BV 115). Urmi visualizes the moments when and where Mira could have written these poems. Urmi admits: “I can see her stealthily, soundlessly getting out of bed, sitting down on the floor by the window perhaps, forgetting everything while she writes” (BV 127).

Mira was discouraged by another poet Velu. When Mira gave some of her poems to read, he said, “why do you to write poetry? It is enough for a young woman like you to give birth to children. That is your poetry. Leave the other poetry to us men” (BV 127). This is a kind of brutality as “even to force your will upon another is to be brutal” (BV 133). It reflects the agony of a creative woman in an androcentric world. It is subordination by domestication. It may be taken as a scheme of depriving woman of imagination and the power of communication. It is as what Cora Kaplan in Sea changes: Culture and Feminism avers: “To be a woman and a poet presents many women poets with such a profound split between their social, sexual identity (their human identity) and
their artistic practice that the split becomes the insistent subject, sometimes overt, often hidden or displaced, of much woman’s poetry” (70). Mira’s silence to voice her failed aspirations in the form of poetry may be taken as “a demand for access to and parity within the law and myth-making groups in society” (Kaplan 71). When Urmi reads Mira’s poems, she loses herself / her self. She admits the changes in her: “It is Mira who is now taking me by the hand and leading me” (BV 135). Later, when Urmi wants to publish Mira’s poems, Vanna is enraged. She feels that Urmi is a traitor who wish to destroy the honour of the family by publishing them. Deshpande writes: “It is as if the knowledge of what her father did, of what he was, has threatened something, disturbed the inner rhythm of her being, so that there is a sense of disharmony about her” (BV 181). Krishna Mohan Pandey in “Dimensional Depth of Female Consciousness: Shashi Deshpande’s The Binding Vine” says: “The effort of Urmi to publish Mira’s poems aims (sic) at discovering the strangled voice articulating woman’s silent discourse, deciphering the coded language and liberating the imagination of woman from inferior to exterior. This may be taken to mean that Deshpande converts a muted woman into a ‘talking woman’ and provides the cause, will, strength and means to articulate the silence of women” (136).

In Terrors, Saru seeks a balance of childhood experiences in parental home and the experience of life after marriage and the realization of difference of treachery of life in parental home and the home of her husband. The return to her parental home is not a desirable option for Saru but for her it is a self chosen strategy to rationalize her guilt ridden conscious. Saru redefines the gender roles in which she has been destined to survive in. It is as Nabinabh Tripathi in “Gender Identity and Inner Space in The Dark
Holds No Terrors” affirms: “The novel projects the post-modern dilemma of a woman who strongly resents the onslaught on her individuality and identity” (43). In fact, Deshpande rejects / discards the gender roles. She looks for new gender roles and “haunts for new gender roles in which woman for a complete self has to make a balance of social images and the inner spaces which are instrumental in the reconstruction of gender roles” (Agarwal, Mosaic 33). It is as Tripathi observes:

Shashi Deshpande’s novel The Dark Holds No Terrors ambivalently projects deconstruction as well as reconstruction of gender roles as the female protagonist of the novel is constantly and often unconsciously in search of an inner space which is instrumental in the reconstruction of gender identity in the wake of being deconstructed. (43)

The negligence of mother, indifference of father and the burden of the guilt of the death of brother, enforce Saru to leave her parental home and to seek space in professional life.

The personal conflict of Saru admits horizontal and vertical axis. In Manu’s company, the focus of crisis remains on her personal accomplishment as a doctor and her responsibility as a mother and wife. Deshpande admits that woman always identifies her interest with the interest of man but man in spite of all his love and sympathy fails to identify himself with the interests of woman. The reversal of gender roles inspire women surrender their professional life to secure and stabilize their personal life. Saru admits: “a+b they told us in mathematics is equal to b+a. But here a+b was not definitely equal to b+a. It became a monstrously unbalanced equation, lopsided, unequal, impossible” (DT 42). The reversal of gender roles might be injustice to a woman but it is a complete
annihilation of the domination in the personality of Manu. She becomes restless. She has clear vision about the latent insecurity of male consciousness. She admits:

Perhaps, there is something in the male, she now thought, that is whittled down and ultimately destroyed by female domination. It is not so with female. She can be dominated, she can submit and hold something of herself in reserve. As if there is something in her that prevents erosion and self destruction. (DT 85)

The mechanical and forced love between Saru and Manu in the moments of privacy is a compulsive promise in which there are little spaces for natural love. She realizes the hollowness of such compromises. She admits: “It was not just that he was more intense with nibbling little kisses interspread with long devouring ones so that she could scarcely breath. It was the feeling that he was whipping himself on, trying to arouse himself to some pitch of excitement that yet remain beyond them” (DT 86). To Saru, marriage becomes an illusion. Beena Agarwal in Mosaic of the Fictional World of Shashi Deshpande avers: “She reconstructs her individuality but loses the contentment of femininity that implies the synthesis of sexual desires with the sublime realization of human love” (41). It is as S.P. Swain in “Shashi Deshpande’s The Dark Holds No Terrors: Saru’s Feminine Sensibility” observes: “She marries to attain autonomy of the self and to secure the lost love in her parental home. Manu is her savior, the ideal romantic hero who rescues her from her insecure wooden existence in her maternal home. Her marriage with Manu is an assertion on and affirmation of her feminine sensibility”
However, the forced and feelingless relationship is a greater loss of Saru’s individuality and femininity.

To Jaya, the move from their posh churchgate house to the small flat in Dadar turns out to be traumatic. She is, in fact, shocked by the consequences of three happenings in her life – the insecurity caused by the possibility of Mohan’s losing his job, his subsequent disappearance, and the running away of her son, who has been vacationing with her family friends – Rupa and Ashok. She admits: “It was like a house collapse during the monsoon. There was something desolating about the case with which what had seemed so substantial fell away, almost contemptuously leaving behind an embarrassing nakedness” (LS 174). In fact, she anxiously waits for the disaster to happen on her. She broods:

there had been for me that other waiting… waiting fearfully for disaster, for a catastrophe. I always had this feeling – that if I have escaped it today. It’s still there round the corner waiting for me : the locked door, the empty house, the messenger of doom bringing news of death. With Mohan’s confession. I was actually relieved. Here it was at last my disaster. No more waiting, no more apprehension, no more fears. (LS 30)

Commenting on the scene, M. Rajeshwar in “The Trauma of a House-Wife : A Psychological Study of Shashi Deshpande’s That Long Silence” avers:

Yet the conscious bravado does not sustain at the unconscious level. She therefore cringes, and unable like Savitri of the myth, with whom she
fondly compares herself (11) to dog her husband’s tormentors, neurotically breaks into a dialogue with herself subjecting everything that matters to her in life to minute analysis perhaps in the spirit of Yajnavalkya’s scholarly wife Maitreyee […] (49).

Jaya in her role as a child, a woman, a wife and a writer feels lack of communication. In the beginning of the novel, she tries to reason out with her father as to why she should not listen to the songs broadcast on the radio, but ultimately she keeps silent, suppressing her desire. It creates a gap between her and Mohan. When Mohan keeps on questioning her, she does not find a word to answer all his queries. She admits: “I racked my brains to think of an answer” (LS 31). Jaya has imposed a long silence on herself. Sarbjit K. Sandhu in The Image of Woman in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande observes:

Her negative approach coupled with her habit of discerning and analyzing every situation causes a havoc in her personal life. She does not like to submit to the male-chauvinistic ideas, for her prudence does not allow her to submit before ignorance. Thus, there ensues a struggle between ignorance and prudence. (42)

It is not only her own silence that Deshpande highlights in Silence but also the silence of other characters too. It is as Veena Sheshadri relates: “The novel is not only about Jaya’s efforts to obliterate the silence that is suffocating her. It is also about the despair and resignation of women like Mohan’s mother; Jaya’s servant; Jaya’s mentally disturbed cousin Kusum. It also deals with Mohan’s silence which is the silence of a man who speaks but confined no one to listen to him” (95). It is a kind of submission to
oppression. It is as Deborah Cameron in *Feminism and Linguistic Theory* suggests that “Silence is a symbol of oppression, which liberation is speaking out, making contact. Contact is what matters. A woman who lies or who is silent may not lack a language, but she does not communicate” (7).

*Terrors* is about mother – daughter relationships, about incomplete and warped families, about relationships that need to be reworked outside the conventional frameworks. Saru’s mother has withdrawn her maternal blessings. “Saru’s life itself has become a testing ground for the principles of femininity and masculinity and the boundaries that demarcate these roles” (Jain, *Gendered Realities* 50). The mother does not forgive her daughter and the daughter does not ask for forgiveness. “The *Dark Holds No Terrors* is about several things – about Saru’s being denied a childhood, of the inadequacies of the small family which forecloses the possibility of others stepping into the vacant spots, of the way in which families become the place for deciding the future course of a person’s life. Her own relationship with her children makes her fear a similar distancing from them. Finally, the balance is restored when her father steps in to the role of a confidant when he offers her sympathy, understanding and advice, when he persuades her to replace a sense of self-blame and grievance with investment in the present and when he tells her to comfort her ghosts, not to run away from them” (Jain, *Gendered Realities* 51).

The relationship with one’s parents is not necessarily always one of love and affection. It may be often of resistance and evaluation. Saru in *Terrors* is constantly rebelling against her mother, judging and critiquing her. Urmi in *Vine* is unwilling to
grant her mother the unquestioning affection of a daughter. Motherhood places a huge burden on a woman. In Terrors, Saru’s whole life goes off the rails because her mother had tried too hard to mould her into a woman’s role. Usha Bande in “Mother, Daughter and Daughter’s Daughter – A Study of Deshpande” considers the attitudes of daughters like Indu, Jaya, and Saru, towards their mother to be ambivalent “full of anger and remorse, hostility and harmony” and mothers and surrogate mothers are not “matriarchs to reckon with, but suffocating shadows to be shunned” (134). She looks at the oppositional relationship as one rising out of a need to find and define a ‘self’. In fact, the relationships reflect a conflict within the growing child between the forces of conformity and of individuation. The older women are not necessarily shadows to be shunned. They have a presence. Akka is a strong woman. Even Saru’s mother is strong. They have their power that is different from the quality of being independent. They draw it through conformity. The younger women look outwards and for other role models. Women like Leela of Remedies are a combination of traditional strength and modern independence. The quality of motherhood is in some ways related to how these women perceive themselves. Mohan’s mother in Silence aborts her fifth child, whereas Mira in Vine is trapped in her pregnancy. Savitribhai in Remedies rejects her daughter, Munni, and totally erases her from her. However, mothers often seek fulfillment through their children and look for vicarious satisfaction as does Kalpana’s mother in her relationship with her sister.

Saru in Terrors hates her mother as she puts all sorts of restrictions on her freedom. Her mother equally hates her. She says: “What daughter? I have no daughter” (DT 100). She falls ill but hates to go to the doctor for the simple reason that her
daughter is also a doctor. Saru hates her mother even when she is dead. “I hate her, sapping me of happiness, of everything. She’s always done it to me... taken happiness away from me. She does it even now when she’s dead” (DT 100). Based on this only Rashmi Gaur in *Women’s Writing: Some Facets* observes:

**The Dark Holds No Terrors** exhibits the trauma of a girl-child who has suffered bullying and curtailment of activity by her mother, but who, nonetheless, wants to assert her identity as an autonomous individual in life. This girl-child Saru grows up as a victim of her mother’s sexist and gender based bias; which reduces her later life into a desperate struggle to overcome the initial victimisation, to justify her decisions to her mother who no longer acknowledges her as a daughter, and to find out a new meaning to her life which could enable her to develop and nurture a balanced perspective towards her diversified roles as a mother, as a wife, and as a career woman. Although, Shashi Deshpande has taken up other problems too, which are faced by a woman in today’s chauvinist society, yet the strange mother-daughter relationship is centrally significant to the understanding of this novel: the mother, who has inculcated the norms of a closed-minded conservative society in which a woman is morally bound to prefer a son; and the daughter, who is yet to come to terms to her mother’s dictates about her secondary status in the family. (88)

Saru tries hard to understand her mother. It makes her split her self and to be stubborn and adamant in her ways of life. Valli Rao in “‘The Devi entered into her’:
Feminist Mythmaking in Shashi Deshpande’s *The Dark Holds No Terrors*” says:

“Saru’s search for understanding of her mother is a search for her own feminine side and for the renunciation of her split self. Her journey is from a hostile attitude towards the mother to a positive and accepting one which can see the mother as the creative essence of the feminine” (107). In Saru’s view, her mother is a domineering woman. Her mother has gained her power in a patriarchal structure by silencing her own husband. “The ‘power’ that Sarita’s mother exercises is the power as one who has accepted the ascribed role which provides the certainty and security of tradition. This power over the domestic domain is different from that of Akka’s, who had enjoyed authority in the family because of her age and money” (Atrey 74).

Like Akka, Saru’s mother also has had a very unhappy childhood. Saru’s maternal grandmother had been deserted by her husband. He left her with the burden of bringing up two girl children, one of whom had been Saru’s mother. Hence, Saru’s mother had grown into a silent woman. She had been conditioned to regard a girl child as a burden; hence, her domineering treatment of Saru. She never thought of female independence, equality and education which Saru aspires to get and by revolting against her mother she acquires them also. Saru tries to be unlike her. Rashmi Sahi in “Mother-Daughter Relationship in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande” admits that “the mother-daughter relationship is based on gender-bias and lovelessness” (20). Deshpande portrays mothers not as matriarchs but as suffocative and authoritative fissures. Saru in *Terrors* goes against her mother and drains herself emotionally and physically.
Saru’s anger over her mother is more vehement and rancorous. She rejects her mother with a venomous remark: “if you’re a woman, I don’t want to be one” (DT 62-63). She rejects her family and mother to become a female hero. Usha Bande in “Mother, Daughter and Daughter’s Daughter-A Study of Shashi Deshpande” says: “The little rebel of yore who used to resent her mother’s gender-bias mutely, becomes overtly defiant. She rebels against her mother, marries the man of her choice, takes pride in her independence and for fifteen years lives under a spell. She too, like Indu, severs her bond with the family and does not attempt to reconcile” (136-137). Even though Saru holds a wrath against her mother, she feels guilty for her own rashness. She goes home after she learns of her mother’s death and becomes like her mother. She accepts:

It’s because I wronged her that I am suffering now. And, the more I suffer, the greater the chance, perhaps of my expiating that wrong. Wasn’t that she had always thought, always told herself? Why, then, did the idea, the words, seem so melodramatic, so unreal, when she said them aloud?

(DT 204)

She has no consciousness of her mother’s way of doing things. Shubha Tiwari in “The Heroine in The Dark Holds No Terrors by Shashi Deshpande” openly admits that “Saru is an unwanted child. Her brother’s death makes her all the more unwanted. She is on perpetual war with her mother who could never forgive her for being alive when her brother was dead. An unwanted child is perplexed child and so is Saru” (85). Not only as a child she gets used to be perplexed, but as a woman and a doctor she was/is also made to be perplexed in life. For the world, during the day time, she is known as a
confidant and competent doctor but in the night time, she becomes a scared, tortured woman. She “in the day time wore a white coat and an air of confidence and knowing and at night became a terrified, trapped animal” (DT 132). Saru becomes a mere shadow.

In Terrors, death assumes almost a sinisterly destructive role. Dhruva’s death brings his mother’s life to a standstill. Such is her emotional involvement in the male child that she gives her daughter the feeling of being unwanted. When Dhruva dies, the mother asks Saru: “Why are you alive when he is dead?” (DT 191). Simultaneously Saru loads herself with a sense of guilt, which reduces her sense of self-growth. “The sharing of grief, which in itself is an imprisonment ritual of bereavement and which supports the process of recovery, never really takes place in Saru’s case. The child is left to her own sense of guilt and self-criticism and pushed into a prison of her inner conflicts wherein she feeds her resentment or anger. She is left with a sense of her inadequacy and ugliness, terminating her childhood prematurely and she is forced towards adulthood. The relationship between Saru and her mother subverts all conventional expectations one has from these roles” (Jain, Gendered Realities 130). Saru grows up without support. She has no maternal role to follow. “The separation from the mother-caretaker is brought about not naturally, not through growing up and growing away from the ‘narcissistic relation to reality’, but through pain, rejection, and a sense of alienation” (Jain, Gendered Realities 131). It requires a physiological maturation. On the whole, it may be taken that Saru’s mother fails her surviving child in her pursuit of the child she has lost.
Urmi in *Vine* is placed in the similar situation. She pulls herself together when she realizes how her self indulgence in her own grief is adversely affecting Kartik. But Urmi is another woman. She is constantly reviewing her women’s roles – her mother’s and her grandmother’s. Also, her role as a mother is not governed by gender discrimination. For Saru, the parental home becomes a non-existent once she marries against their wishes. Saru is deprived of her childhood as well as the feeling of security that communication with her parents would have provided her with. Dhruva’s death has passed a death sentence on her. It ousts her from her mother’s purview. It is the total reversal of the idea of home. These terrors take the shape of a recurring nightmare. She is very sensitive regarding her relationship with her daughter, Renu, and is apprehensive that it may follow the pattern of her own relationship with her mother. In fact, Saru and her mother are two women of a kind, both stubborn and willful and at times harsh. Saru’s single-minded pursuit of professional ambition equals her mother’s single-minded grieving for her lost son.

*Terrors* projects an entirely different role of families than the ones in *Shadows* and *Silence*. There are two nuclear families. One is the parent family and the other is an offshoot. They are separate in the sense that there is no communication between them and relationships have been severed for all practical purposes. Baba, Ai, and Saru and Dhruva constitute the first family and Saru, Manu, Renu and Abhi constitute the second.

Jaya’s relationship with Kamat cannot be called Platonic love. She confides: “it had been a revelation to me that two people, a man and a woman, could talk this way. With this man, I had not been just myself – Jaya” (LS 153). It is in his presence, she
becomes uninhibited and sheds the crippling silence she imposed on herself as a part of erasing every public sign of her identity. It is to Kamat that she turns for solace when one of her stories is rejected by many editors. At the death of her father, she involuntarily finds herself in the embrace of Kamat, which gives her comfort and solace. She recounts the experience: “There had been nothing but an overwhelming urge to respond to him with my body, the equally overwhelming certainty of mind that I could not do so. Later, there had been confusion” (LS 157). Later, at home, she deliberately arouses the desire of Mohan and makes fierce love to him in an apparent displacement. Her writing and Kamat are not at all what she has given up for the safety of her married life. She has systematically insulated and alienated herself from everything and everybody that posed the remotest threat to the peace of her home. She has built an edifice of security around her husband and children believing it to be a barrow into which she can crawl reptile-like and feel safe (LS 148). M. Rajeshwar in “The Trauma of a Housewife: A Psychological Study of Shashi Deshpande’s That Long Silence” says: “she, like Gandhari of the Mahabharatha symbolically bandages her eyes and grows blind to his weakness. Like Sita who followed her husband into exile, she follows Mohan into the concrete jungle, that is Bombay […]” (45-46). In fact, she becomes dwarfed and annihilated as an individual. She passes from a fiercely independent girl to a “stereotype of a woman, nervous, incompetent, needing male help and support” (LS 76). At the same time, she is continuously haunted by the thought of Mohan’s death. She broods:

I had lived in constant panic that he would die. I had clung to him at night, feeling with relief that warmth of his body, stroking his chest,
letting my palms move with his even deep breaths. The thought of being without him had twisted my insides. His death had seemed to me the final catastrophe. The very idea of his dying had made me feel so bereft that tears had flowed effortlessly down my cheeks. If he had been a little late coming home, I had been sure he was dead. By the time he returned, I had in my imagination, shaped my life to a desolate widowhood. (LS 96-97)

The novel *Terrors* precisely laments this lack of pleasure or joy or ecstasy in sex experience after the initial period of euphoria is over:

I became in an instant a physically aroused woman, with an infinite capacity for loving and giving, with a passionate desire to be absorbed by the man I loved. All the cliches, I discovered were true, kisses were soft and unbearably sweet, embraces hard and passionate, hands caressing and tender, and loving, as well as being loved, was an intense joy. It was as if little nerve ends of pleasure had sprung up all over my body… I was insatiable, not for sex, but for love. Of my being loved. Of my being wanted. If I never have any doubts, I had only to turn to him and ask him to prove his love for me. And he would ... again and again and again. (DT 40)

Saru, for better part of the novel, was bereft of any such experience. It was a monstrous invasion of her body which was much away from the state where the lovers lose their identity out of sheer ecstasy. But this deplorable state of affair is not alone due to Manu’s lack of concern for the feelings of Saru but because of a plethora of factors
directly or indirectly contributing to the relationship between the husband and the wife.

It is because as J. Samuel Kirubahar in “Shashi Deshpande’s The Dark Holds No Terrors, Margaret Atwood’s Bodily Harm and Bapsi Sidhwa’s The Pakistani Bride: Texts as Metaphors of Sexual Violence and Bodily Harm” says:

Sexual perversion in the novels not only destabilizes the cultural components but also makes discourses based on a fierce dialectic between domination and deviation, law and desire, transgression and conformity working through repression, demonizing, displacement and struggle. In modern times, women are presented as Madonna/whore. In novel after another, the female body becomes a culturally mapped and gendered one and also it becomes a site of struggle, pain and change. The female body connotes to-be-looked-at-ness but rather looking-at-being-looked-at-ness as these chosen novels do not present the image of woman but rather they present a vital slice of life – the sexual violence and bodily harm. (62)

It may be possible due to split personality in a woman. So that only Premila Paul in “The Dark Holds No Terrors: A Call for Confrontation” remarks:

The feeling of homelessness is indicative of inner disintegration. Tension between the different parts, between one’s self, takes away the harmony within and without. At times Saru sees herself as two separate halves ‘a two-in-one-woman” a confident professional in the white coat by day and ‘a trapped animal’ by night. At other times it is more than mere dichotomy; is total disintegration. Shashi Deshpande uses effective
It results in psychic disorder. Saru remains a divided individual. She is not able to adjust herself. While commenting on the role of Saru in *Terrors*, Shantha Naik in *A Comparative Study of the Novels of Shashi Deshpande and M.K. Indira : A Social and Cultural Perspectives* says:

> The traumatic story of *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is of a double psychological conflict: the first one is between a mother tradition-bound and custom-fettered and a daughter-intelligent and strong-willed; the second one is between a husband who starts from a position of success and acclaim, but more down will, and a wife who starts from a point where she has been rejected by her mother, but rises through great effort and intelligence. (85)

As the dichotomy goes on within a woman, the woman is estranged and hollowed within her. Her story becomes a story of introspection. Mirinalini Sebastian in *The Enterprise of Reading Differently : The Novels of Shashi Deshpande in Postcolonial Arguments* says that *Terrors* is “once again a story of introspection. Saru, a successful doctor, finds her husband, an English lecturer, who once aspired to be a poet, is as split as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. A loving father and a caring husband during the day who, with evident pride shows off his doctor-wife to his colleagues, turns into a monster in bed abusing her
and bruising her, creating such terror in her that she finds no voice to scream for help” (171).

The discord between Saru and Manu leads to sexual paralysis. Saru admits: “He had been the young man and I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband” (DT 37). However, the real problem is sexual impotency on the part of Manu which leads to sexual sadism inflicted on Saru. Bijay Kumar Das in “That Long Silence: An Indian Paradigm of Character Progression” is of the opinion that “In a way, Jaya is any modern woman of our times who resents the husband’s callousness and becomes the victim of circumstance. By implication her character represents modern woman’s ambivalent attitude to married life” (130). Jaya undergoes a kind of transformation through self-recognition. She makes an introspective study at the end of the novel. The earlier impulsive Jaya becomes a mature woman. Mohan has crushed the woman and the writer in Jaya as he neither loved her nor encouraged her. Jaya has every reason to be bitter with him for he has been responsible for her misery. With a straightforward language, gentle irony and matter-of-fact tone Jaya recalls their role as wife and husband:

Sensual memories are the coldest. They stir up nothing in you. As I thought of those days of my feelings, and then looked at the man lying beside me, nothing stirred in me. Those emotions and responses seemed to belong to two other people, not to the two of us lying here together.

… In fact, we had never spoken of sex at all. It had been as if the experience was erased each time after it happened; it never existed in words…
First there’s love, then there’s sex - that was how I had always imagined it to be. But after living with Mohan I had realised that it could so easily be the other way round.

Love… Yes, what else could I call it but love when I thought of how I had longed for his physical presence, when I remembered how readily almost greedily. I had responded to his touch? What else could I name it when I thought of the agony I had been to be without him, when his desires, his approval, his love, had seemed to be the most important thing in my life? It seems to me now that we had, both of us, rehearsed the roles of husband and wife so well that when the time came we could play them flawlessly, word-perfect. (LS 95)

After years of adjustment and self-surrender, Jaya is even afraid of expressing her likes and dislikes. Thus Jaya, a devoted and loving daughter and sister, is totally different from “soft, smiling, placid and motherly” Jaya (LS 15-16). She is a personality split between what she is and what she could be. Consequently, she finds a relief in self-abnegation; that highlights her maladjustment in married life. As a married woman, she is expected to play versatile roles: those of wife, mother, a submissive and perfect housewife and so on. She shows her disinclination to please the chief engineer’s wife which earns Mohan’s wrath. “I know that I’ve never mattered to you not really,” he says. “I have heard Dinker and you laughing at her, having fun of her, your own mother. How can I except you to have any feelings for me” (LS 118). Now discernable cracks are visible in her mental and emotional equilibrium. Suresh Chandra in “Feministic Aspects
of Recent Indian Fiction: Mahip Singh’s *Who Walks With Me*, Kiran Nagarkar’s *Seven Sixes are Forty Three* and Shashi Deshpande’s *That Long Silence*” observes:

The portrayal of Jaya as an awakened woman, thus soon fades into that of a middle-class romantic heroine whose courage falls at first encounter with reality. All her revolutionary ideas sag by the time the challenge presents itself. Her realization that her husband’s accusation of having let him done are sufficient to shake her dreams of glory for her revolutionary ideas. The narcotic-smoking girl’s contemptuous attitude, shears her of all her self-assumed importance in a glass-house existence. Jaya, thus, signifies the weakness of the servile mind of the service classes. (146)

Asha Susan Jacob in “Voice of the Silenced: A Reading of Shashi Deshpande’s Novels” also says that “She too joins the Deshpande club of split personalities vacillating between the two selves, ‘Suhasini’ steeped in tradition and ‘Jaya’ trying to break the shackles of tradition” (155).

Silence, though mainly concerned with Mohan, Jaya, and the impending disaster, has mothers and grandmothers. These women are traditional and have gender bias. Jaya’s Ai is opposed to her marriage to Mohan. Jaya dislikes her mother and has contempt for her. She blames her for not preparing her for the duties of a woman’s life. Jaya’s memories of her two grand-mothers, the Ajji and the other Ajji are not complimentary either. The other Ajji was a terrible mother. Jaya recollects: “even nostalgia could not make the memory of Ajji a comfortable one. Being with Ajji was like
sitting on those chairs in her room, there were always nails that came out to pierce and hurt” (LS 27).

Jaya has a stormy relationship with Ai who like most traditional woman showers her affection upon her sons and neglects her daughter. Jaya betrays suppressed resentment and patriarchy towards her mother. Jaya accuses Ai not only of domination but also of neglecting to prepare her for the duties and chores of a woman’s life. “On the one hand, Jaya resents her mother’s sexist bias, and on the other, she is angry with her for not having socialized her into her future role of wife and mother. Jaya’s attitude to her mother is subconsciously conditioned by patriarchal expectations of a woman in her mother’s situation” (Atrey 76). Like Saru, she rejects her mother as a role model.

Deshpande’s overall picture of mother is that of orthodox, uneducated / semi-literate, old-fashioned women who cannot give themselves for progress. They would have their younger daughters follow their ways blindly and be satisfied with what they get in life. However, the mothers are not all that mute. They suffer as daughters-in-law and wives but when they assume power, they know how to wield it. Jaya narrates how her two grandmothers-maternal and paternal-exercised their power over their children. She recollects: “My two ajjis, two entirely different women, had been alike in the power they had wielded over their families. Looking back, it seems to me that their children lived their lives reacting against them; lives that had turned out to be, ultimately, a battlefield of dead hopes and ambitions” (LS 82).

Silence portrays Jaya’s oppressed and unsatisfactory life. “The reason for her silent aberration is psychological alienation. Jaya is incessantly tormented by inner
conflicts, given to copious weeping, constantly analyzing her oppressed lot in a male-dominated society. She is affected very much by the ideal of being a nonentity” (Devi, “Terrors and Traumas” 80). It is the result of her inability to communicate her anxieties to the unapproachable and incommunicable indifferent Manu. In fact, she engulfs herself by a sense of seclusion and silence. At the same time she has to wait for Manu. Jaya’s mind is constantly corroded with “Waiting for Mohan to come home, waiting for the children to be born, for them to start school, waiting for them to come home, waiting for milk, waiting for the servant, waiting for the lunch-carrier man” (LS 30). It leads her to the existential nothingness. Her painful silence and suffering leave her emotionally scared and mentally jolted. Commenting on the psychic collapse of Jaya, Mittapalli Rajeshwar in “The Trauma of a House-Wife : Shashi Deshpande’s That Long Silence” says:

Jaya of That Long Silence when required to face a traumatic situation temporarily seeks shelter in neurosis which evades her responsibility as an adult individual for her without her being aware of it. Her suffering has a beneficial effect on her. It initiates the process of self-discovering in her which leads in the last analysis to her fresh perception of life. She emerges at the end of the ordeal as a woman with a certain willingness to compromise with life’s problems while earlier she showed a surprising lack of accommodation and expansiveness. (67)

It is also felt by other critics. Jaya has an inner void. Rashmi Gaur in “Images of Indian Woman in Shashi Deshpande’s That Long Silence – Stereotypes, Myths and Realities” says:
Jaya was aware of an inner void, a hollowness in her life, even though it was shielded by the deceptively beautiful screen of her social graces and obligations. Her stream of consciousness makes it clear that even in the educated upper middle classes the intrinsic value of intelligent and capable woman is invariably affected by her social/married status, since society treats her as an object or a possession-never as an individual. There are moments when for Jaya, social and familial responsibilities do not remain a pleasure, but become a bondage, because she is forced to accept these compulsively as a female. Her married life forces her to put herself on exhibition, but it did not enable her to understand herself successfully. Instead of taking her out of her isolation, it confirms her alienation from the personal and the social worlds. Her inability to establish a normal relationship with her husband enhances her frustration. However, she overcomes the barrier of this unnatural silence after a bitter struggle and realizes that negation of one’s emotional needs never leads a woman towards selfhood. An understanding of one’s motives, accepting responsibilities for one’s decision and clear bilateral communication of priorities and decisions is required to obtain peace, harmony and fulfillment in life. (8-9)

As observed by B.K. Das in “Shashi Deshpande’s That Long Silence and the Question of the Reader Response” Jaya’s role in Silence expresses the “ambivalent attitude of contemporary independent minded Indian Women” (202). Deshpande’s heroine moves from self-abnegation to self-realisation. Her experiences compel her to struggle for her
self-emancipation. Jaya learned, submissive and taciturn but the admixture of brilliance and creativity introduces complexity in her character by providing her an individual identity, though outwardly she tries hard to fit into the role of a housewife. Sumitra Kukreti in “Female Protagonists in Shashi Deshpande’s Novels” is of the view that “In the process of hiding for true self and to adjust with her insensitive husband, she gets reduced to a puppet. At the close of the novel when she is unable to suppress her emotions any more, she becomes neurotic” (193). Jaya’s “neurosis is caused by bottled up feelings, because when people repress their feelings, they repress their memories and traumatic experiences” (Moller, _Breakthrough_ 22). Jaya undergoes a prolonged suppression of the personality of the individual. She domesticates herself and accepts the stereotyped role of a housewife who is “nervous, incompetent, needing male help and support” (LS 77). Commenting on Jaya’s traumatic tendency J. Bhavani in “Nirdvandra : Individuation and Integration as Heroine’s Quest in Shashi Deshpande’s Fiction” says : “Jaya’s psychological war is between the role she has been playing to please Mohan and the self she wishes to be. In _That Long Silence_, Deshpande makes a next split between the persona and the self so that the protagonist becomes two different women : Suhasini and Jaya” (27). Not only Jaya becomes a victim but also the other characters in the novel too become victims. Arati Biswal in “Sound of the Silenced : Shashi Deshpande’s _That Long Silence_” observes :

Though Jaya breaks through her silence, other women characters in the novel are victims of their silence, allowing it to smother their latent desires. Her mother-in-law; Vimala, her sister-in-law and Jeejabai, the domestic help, silently suffer the injustice of male oppression. Jaya
unmasks herself and relinquishes a silent martyrdom. In Jaya, the dual aspects of the feminine consciousness – one accepting male definition and identity, and the other, the androgynous aspect that revolts against male-imposed traditional constraints, is seen. Jaya’s struggle to regain her freedom, to live life on her own terms is her attempt to establish her ‘real’ self. (43)

And as a result, in the end of the novel, she returns home and broods over her life. She has to make compromises with her and also with her family and her husband. She has to articulate her silence or break free of her muted condition. So that only, while analyzing her silence, Shraddha Dubey in “The Journey From Silence to Eloquence in Shashi Deshpande’s ‘That Long Silence’” concludes as follows:

Thus at the end, she breaks the silence of centuries and decides to speak a different language not ‘Prakrit’ (which was meant only for women) but Sanskrit. Towards the end of the novel Jaya recalls Lord Krishna’s words to Arjun: ‘I have given you knowledge. Now you make the choice. The choice is yours. Do as you desire’ (192). Implicit in this is the recognition that is woman’s destiny is ultimately in her own hands. Jaya is an example of a character seeking strength from a more vital part of our tradition in order to move towards greater autonomy and greater mutuality. Shashi Deshpande is concerned with empowering women. If knowledge of the self is power, she arms her central character Jaya with it. Hence we find Jaya hopefully completes her journey from silence to
eloquence with positive assertion of her character by confronting the problems before her life. (120)

She has to fit her into her role by confronting her own problems. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan in “The Feminist Plot and the Nationalist Allegory: Home and World in Two Indian Women’s Novels in English” says that “The limbo of waiting and anxiety allows Jaya to reflect on her life and upon her roles as a woman – daughter, sister, wife, mother, daughter-in-law, friend, mistress, and writer of general ‘feminine’ newspaper pieces” (73). It gives her dilemma-whether to fall into a given role or not. She has to decide what she has to do with the problem. Shakuntala Bharvani in “Some Recent Trends in Modern Indian Fiction: A Study of Shashi Deshpande’s That Long Silence, Shashi Tharoor’s The Great Indian Novel and Amitav Ghosh’s The Shadow Lines” says: “That Long Silence presents Jaya caught in this dilemma: firstly, trying to be a fit wife to her husband and secondly, struggling to express the kind of emotions women experience, but seldom expressed in a male-dominated chauvinistic society” (150). She has to accept her role. It is as G. Lakshmi Narasaiah in “Life Inside the Cage: Shashi Deshpande’s That Long Silence” concludes:

Jaya’s is not the voice of either metaphysical or social rebellion but of acceptance of the human condition and the predicament of her life as a woman. It is an acceptance with a difference, however, a declaration that, as a woman and as a writer, she is trying to cope. (136)

She makes a journey from ignorance to experience but is very reluctant to voice/express it. She has to show herself as a confident woman. S. Prasanna Sree in Woman in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande: A Study says:
Jaya, like Indu of *Roots and Shadows* and Saru of *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, journeys from ignorance to knowledge through suffering. Going through a process of introspection, self-analysis and self-realization, she emerges as a confident individual, fully in control of herself, significantly more hopeful and able to accept life just as they do. If Indu is a journalist and Saru, a doctor, Jaya is a successful columnist and an aspiring novelist.

Asha Susan Jacob in “Voice of the Silenced : A Reading of Shashi Deshpande’s Novels” says that “Through Saru, the doctor protagonist of *The Dark Holds No Terrors* Deshpande highlights how emancipation and success for woman in the patriarchal Indian society can cause subversion of roles in the family and destroy happiness. The social status and recognition Saru gleans as a doctor and the demands on her time cleave a wedge in her marital life” (151-152).

In the end of the novel *Terrors*, Saru sets out to attend Sunita who is sick. Saru says to her father “Baba, if Manu comes, tell him to wait. I’ll be back as soon as I can (DT 221). She asserts her individuality. It also shows her willingness to control reality. It further shows her assertion of her career. She emerges as a new woman who can control herself and shed her passivity. She rebels against tradition but ultimately tries to compromise with the existing reality. S. Prasanna Sree in *Woman in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande : A Study* concludes : “This is because, Saru lives in transitional society. Saru passes from the illusion to reality, from frustration to submission and as the wheel finally comes round, she makes an ultimate attempt to reconcile herself” (66).
Despite these obvious tussles with the mother, the daughters have an irresistible urge to return home. Indu goes home after eleven years to find herself not only as an inheritor of Akka’s property, but of her indomitable spirit also. Saru’s return after fifteen years is significant as it speaks of her urge to be forgiven for her rashness.

Saru in Terrors presents the process of forming a gender identity. She goes out to deconstruct the socially imposed gender roles framed by a patriarchal society but she comes back to reconstruct her intuitive role(s). P. Ramamoorthi in “‘My Life is My Own’ : A Study of Deshpande’s Women” says : “Saru in Dark also undergoes the arduous journey into herself and learns to free herself of guilt, shame, humiliation, and she is also initiated into the mystery of human experience” (47). Further, he writes : “She understands that neither her father nor her husband Manohar can be her refuge. She is her own refuge. She has to overcome herself; she has to kill the ghosts that haunt her, she has to fight her own way to salvation” (47). It is the same as Beena Agarwal in Mosaic of the Fictional World of Shashi Deshpande says :

The life of Saru, […] is evidently a Saga of a modern woman, how she redefines her ‘self’ to escape the perpetual darkness of torture, injustice and ignomity. To escape the shadows of the animosity of parents, she reaffirms her identity in her professional achievements and later on tries to seek fulfillment in her married life. However, after the failure at these two stages, she turns back to recollect and reorganize what she had left in her parental home. In this respect, Shashi Deshpande follows a circular vision to constitute the fluidity of female identity. (31)
It can also be taken as a journey of a woman to explore the mystery of human condition. So that only S.P. Swain in “Shashi Deshpande’s The Dark Holds No Terrors: Saru’s Feminine Sensibility” says that “Saru’s arduous journey in The Dark Holds No Terrors is an initiation into the mystery of human existence. She realizes that parental home is no refuge. Neither her father nor her mother can provide her shelter. She is her own refuge” (39). Further Swain writes that “Saru’s journey is a journey from self-alienation to self-identification, from negation to assertion, from diffidence to confidence” (39). It is also reiterated by P. Venugopalan in “Bildungsroman: Shashi Deshpande’s Version in The Dark Holds No Terrors” as follows: “The refugee fleeing from mysterious terrors of life has, in the end, to turn inwards for refuge” (21). It helps to formulate or reconstruct gender roles. Nalinabh Tripathi in “Gender Identity and Inner Space in The Dark Holds No Terrors” points out that the novel Terrors, “ambivalently projects deconstruction as well as reconstruction of gender roles as the female protagonist of the novel is constantly, and often unconsciously, in search of an ‘inner space’, which is instrumental in the reconstruction of gender identity in the wake of its being deconstructed” (43). The novel presents the postmodern dilemma of a woman who strongly resents the onslaught on her individuality and identity. So that only Premila Paul in “The Dark Holds No Terrors: A Call for Confrontation” observes that “Saru is highly self-willed and her problems ensue because of her outsized ego and innate love for power over others. She defies traditional codes at the slightest threat to her importance as that is what she missed and craved for in her mother’s house” (31). Once again due to Manu’s sexual sadism, she leaves her home. “From this ‘inner space’ Saru moves to another ‘inner space’, i.e. her father’s home. If the ‘inner face’ with her husband was marked by his sexual sadism,
then this one is marked by a psychological trauma. Her emotional upsurge breaks all barriers and she bares her sexual life to her father” (Tripathi 42-43).

Saru’s introspection makes her realize that her success as a doctor has killed the spirit of Manu. Actually, her introspection helps her free herself from the feelings of guilt that she has made Manu what he is. She decides not to endure humiliation because of Manu’s failure and her success. She decides to assert herself and fight her own battle. There is no refuge. With this mind, she confidently waits to confront her husband and decides to go back to Bombay. Actually this going back to Bombay is not to endure the humiliation. S.K. Mishra in *The Life and Works of Shashi Deshpande : A Critical Study* relates: “Saru as a wife finds refuge in the doctor in herself. It is the doctor who is going to help the wife in her to care her husband with the power of the doctor. She is bold enough to go back to her husband and cure him of his depression caused by inferiority complex and during normal harmony in her family life” (115). Saru resolves not to be a sexual victim of Manu. Srinivasa Iyengar in *Indian Writing in English* concludes:

Strips herself of self deceptions, quilt complexes and emotive illusions, and Shashi Deshpande’s language itself flickers like a candle and blobs of remembrance melt and form icicles of furrowing thought. Sarita cannot forget her children and so she decides to face her home again. In this unpredictable world, even total despair can open up a new spring of elemental self-confidence. (758)
Saru waits for her husband to come to take her back and start their life afresh. Indu in *Shadows* plans to go back to her husband and tell him everything about herself. Jaya in *Silence* interprets Mohan’s letter in positive terms and hopes for the better. Back in her father’s house, when she is busy working out her anger against her past, her childhood, her mother’s condemnation of her and her father’s passive acceptance of the situation, she also reviews her own relationship with Manu. She does it dispassionately and analytically. There is in her review, a whole evaluation of masculinity. Saru finds herself gradually slipping into the role of a domestic / domesticated wife. She begins to tie her hair as her mother used to do. On the physical plane, she finds herself slipping into her mother’s role. Her adult life has been shaped and emmited by her childhood experiences. Now, for the first time, she is able to talk about them to her father as she blames him for being passive and having condemned her as guilty even without hearing her side of the story. Later, when she has to nurse Madhav through his illness, she does, not merely as a doctor but as a family member who would do the same to the dead Dhruva. The two roles, social and the familial, are combined. It allows her to bring her two selves together. She, in fact, overcomes the sense of self-estrangement which she has cultivated and lived with for years. “This time Saru does not see the ugly child her mother had labeled her as – but a woman who looked young and ‘somehow softened’. It is a new self-image, the self-image of a woman no longer better and unhappy, no longer running away from herself, but willing to face the present. Her father feels her not to be an esceptist, he makes her realize that if she wants the role of an adult, she has to take her own decisions” (Jain, *Gendered Realities* 103-104). Saru cannot run away from Manu. She wants to “become whole again” (DT 220).
Saru’s return home in *Silence* is a home coming. She wants to be enfolded in love. She also wants to reassess her self-image, but things have changed. The ground is bare “beaten down to a smooth hardness, in which nothing grew, not even weeds. There had never been an attempt to grow anything, either …” (LS 15). Her father is not curious. They do not even grieve together. The room which had once belonged to her is now occupied by Madhav. She is permanently dislocated and is made to ask “where is my room” (LS 32). Homes that are meant to offer comfort and security are no longer able to do so. Her childhood home had expelled her. Her married home with its luxury, a paradise of matching curtains and affluence, also threatens her very being. She has never had the kind of relationship daughters ordinarily have with their mother. She has passed on some of the same hostility to her own relationship with her daughter. She broods:

Renu. My daughter. 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. She does not talk much. She reminds me of a room whose doors are closed. Nothing emerges, neither her joys nor her sorrows. (LS 33)

“And thus this home coming, which begins not merely with a perception of the bare ground in her mother’s backyard, but also the hollyhocks Madhav has planted there, becomes a route to finding some comfort and security, something she has missed all along” (Jain, *Gendered Realities* 49-50). As she gradually falls into the routine of the house, women from the neighbourhood begin to visit her. She becomes very busy with
cleaning the rice and cooking food. “Both comfort and security had come to her… from the very pattern of their life together” (LS 160). It relieves the tension of her inflated self-image and the determination not to be like her. Now, she increasingly begins to look like her. Commenting on Deshpande’s heroines’ returning to their parental home, P. Ramamoorthi in “‘My Life is My Own’ : A Study of Deshpande’s Women” says: “‘Nostros’, the Greek word meaning return home describes aptly the situation of Indu and Saru. Fearing that their continued stay would stifle their progress in the road to self-understanding, they come to their parental homes, the homes which they dreaded as teenagers. Their return home is a sure sign of their escape from sexual politics” (44-45). The physical, sexual and psychological violence against Saru is normative punishment. She “is not radically defiant like Ibsen’s Nora or Toni Morrison’s Sethe. Though she has overcome the ‘scarcity-syndrome’ and ‘identity-crisis’” (Dwivedi, “To Be or Not To Be” 233). Kamini Dinesh in “Moving Out of the Cloistered Self : Shashi Deshpande’s Protagonists” compares Saru and Jaya thus:

Though Saru and Jaya have their own distinct worlds – that of a working woman and a housewife – yet through them Shashi Deshpande charts in a fictionalized version the unacknowledged private world of a woman. Saru and Jaya have altogether different career objectives and attainments and a discrete set of experiences. Saru is a socially respected medical practitioner with an assured comfortable way of life; Jaya has not achieved the distinction she desired as a writer, but, with her husband’s position and means, maintains a satisfying social standard. Saru is a woman with a vocation, a professional, Jaya at best a housewife leading a seemingly
untroubled life with her family. But behind this façade their way of life seems to violate their very nature. For them the wheel of life moves on small cogs each well fitted in the groove of a traditional and cultural conception of an image or role unconsciously imbibed by them. Saru and Jaya are stifled in these roles. Through the landscape of their mind, Shashi Deshpande addresses herself to the issues concerning the individuality of women. (197)

It is as Seema Jena in Carving a Pattern Out of Chaos : Withdrawal a Narrative Device in Women’s Writing says that “the technique of withdrawal becomes a means by which a woman rediscovers her personality and digs up her hidden potential and learns not to repress her talents” (28) Deshpande’s protagonists are able to view their future more positively after delving into their past. Concerning the heroine’s return to her parental home in all the novels of Deshpande, it can be said as Betty Friedan observes in The Feminine Mystique : “The end of the road in an almost literal sense, is the disappearance of the heroine altogether, as a separate self and the subject of her own story. The end of the road is togetherness, where the woman has no independent self to hide even in guilt; she exists only for and through her husband and children” (32).

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