Chapter III

3. The Role of Married Women: Problems in Married Life

Deshpande not only portrays career woman as a victim of the male-dominated society, but also presents in general that all women—whether they are career woman or a woman in the household—remain victims of one form or the other in a patriarchal society as they are denied of freedom—freedom of expression, freedom of choice, freedom of dependence and so on. Akka and Indu in Shadows, Urmi in Vine and Madhu in Remedies have problems of their own in their role as daughter, wife and so on. They have to endure all those problems that would come in their way. Akka and Indu have made transformations in their lives as they pass from soft, docile creatures into hard nuts to break. Urmi becomes a woman questioner as she used to question everything but she becomes a muted woman when she comes to know of the life of Kalpana—a rape victim. Madhu is also astonished at knowing the real history of Savitribai. In fact, they have their exodus from ignorance into experience. It is their enterprise that makes them realize their work and their existence.

In Shadows, Akka is the head of the family. She has become the unquestioned ruler of the roost. She is the traditional mother-figure. She toes the line set by old customs, rituals, and traditions. She is a childless widow. She came back to her parental home ages ago to be the ruthless and dominating bigot and inconsiderate Akka. She controlled the others like Kaka, Atya and others by her venomous tongue. All others took it without questioning because they had been trained to fear, respect, and obey authority. Indu is the only girl who protested against her. She rebelled and married
Jayant against her wishes. Akka had displayed an immense strength. Unable to get out of the marriage, she had stayed on till the death of her husband, clearly defining her territory. Indu’s aunt, Atya, is not so strong. She takes a back seat in her widowed seat. Kaki yields on social issues, but defends her right to choose a suitable husband for her daughter, Mini.

Akka gains her power, strength and freedom only after the death of her mother-in-law and the paralytic stroke of her husband. Her weak, dependent, and ineffectual identity transforms into power and authority. “Money and mental freedom modify Akka’s spectrum of life. She too becomes the emblem of parental authority governing and guiding the fortune of her grandchildren. Her presence and authority provide security to other women in the family who were the victims of identical financial crisis and the course of barrenness” (Agarwal 54).

Akka’s story is narrated by Atya (Indu’s father’s widowed sister) in the fourth chapter. It carries within the seeds of Mira’s story developed in Vine. It is also the typical story of an unequal marriage, a marriage when a child bride is tagged on to a fully mature man, who may not be sensitive to the trauma of the young child. Akka begins her married life sandwiched between a harsh mother-in-law and an insensitive, lecherous husband. Later, she has to tolerate the several women in his life, nurse him through the last illness and live with a sense of rejection. Akka’s inheritance has been earned through a tremendous amount of suffering, tolerance and anguish. And her return to the family home is in search of emotional support. The house offers her respite from the memories of her married life.
In *Shadows* economic deprivation and physical torture are used to curb the growth of a woman. Shubha Dwivedi in “’To Be or Not To Be’ : The Question of Professional Women in Shashi Deshpande’s *The Dark Holds No Terrors, Roots and Shadows* and *Small Remedies*” says:

The fact that money not only confers freedom, but also access to power, grace, prestige and an altogether confident and positive attitude towards one’s own self and one’s capabilities, is an overt statement made by the narrative. Akka, a rich, childless widow becomes a tyrant and dominates too much authority on family matters. Atya and other family members eulogize her as a leader, who assures happiness to everybody. Akka becomes indispensable to the family while the enforced subjugation and poverty of other women of the family results in their mental, moral and physical inferiority. (236)

Akka represents the strength of the traditional women. Indu describes Akka as “ruthless, bigoted, dominating and inconsiderate” (RS 24) and as a “malicious, trouble-loving, trouble-creating old woman” (RS 103). Indu takes Akka as a role model. She grows up rebelling against Akka’s restrictive ways, when she was ruling the household. When Indu acquires a higher education, a career as a free-lance writer and a husband of her own, Akka frowns at Indu.

Akka’s traumatic girlhood is an example of the tragic consequences of child-marriage. She is married at the age of eighteen to a fully grown and uncared man double her age. At a tender age, she has to submit herself to the violent sexual advances. She
begins to regard sex as punishment. Even she tries to escape from her mother-in-law’s house and is caught in the process of running away from her mother-in-law’s house. But “her mother-in-law whipped her for that and locked her up for three days. Starved her as well. And then, sent her back to her husband’s room... there was no escape from a husband then [...]” (RS 77). Akka is forced to become pregnant. Her immature and under developed body cannot give birth to a living child and this adds to her misfortune as she is branded inauspicious and evil because of her childlessness. It is only after the death of her mother-in-law and her husband’s paralytic attack, Akka has freedom. When her husband dies, she refuses to allow his mistress to see him in the death bed. This is the first time that she asserts her freedom. However, by asserting herself, Akka regains atleast some of her lost self-esteem and confidence. With her husband’s death, she acquires his wealth and returns to her natal home as a rich, childless widow. Mukta Atrey and Viney Kirpal in Shashi Deshpande : A Feminist Study of Her Fiction aver : “Akka’s character becomes more complex with her emergence as a woman with a potential for leadership, a potential which had remained suppressed and untapped in her youth” (73). Her presence provides security to other women in the household and especially to women like Atya who has to fall back upon her natal family for economic sustenance. The security provided by Akka is not just financial but psychological too. It is revealed by Atya to Indu. Atya admits : “As long as she was with us, we never felt we had no parents. I didn’t feel so orphaned even when mother died. And because Akka was there, we were still young. Now I’m bold, orphaned and old” (RS 33). However, Deshpande gives two different types of women in Shadows. One set is represented by Akka, Narmada, Atya, Sumitra Kaki, Kamala Kaki, Sunanda Atya and Padmini. To this
set, a woman’s life is nothing but “to get married, to bear children, to have sons, and then grandchildren” (RS 128). To them, a female could “neither assert, demand nor proclaim,” (RS 146) and an ideal woman is one who “sheds her ‘I,’ who loses her identity in her husband’s” (RS 54). According to them, a woman has to “adapt herself to her circumstances and environment” and be “greedy, devious, and unscrupulous” (RS 146). Against this ages old set up of woman’s life, the new one represented by Indu, an educated modern young woman, is placed. She views and reviews the concepts of self, sin, faith, love, etc. She has visions and revisions of her ideal of detachment and freedom and tries to achieve them. She tries to see and listens to the voice of her conscience and revolts. But in all her efforts, she fails miserably either due to the impact of fear and timidity.

Leela of Remedies is not like Akka of Shadows. She does not return to her natal home but stays on with her in-laws after her husband’s death. Leela is a woman confident and well aware of her needs. From her very childhood, she shows an inclination towards studies rather than the domestic chores considered most suitable for girls. Seen as a rebel, she is married to a man of few means by her grandmother, who wanted to punish her. But for Leela, the punishment turns into a blessing as her husband encourages her to study and she clears her metric examination. Her husband’s death due to TB further strengthens her resolve to be independent and answer her callings. It rather gives her a direction and purpose, as she has to support her young brother-in-law and ailing mother-in-law. Considering them as responsibility, Leela refuses to return to her parent’s house. This severs her relations with her own family but her determination and strength make her successfully take up a teaching career and support her in-laws. Thus,
Leela’s awareness of her responsibility towards her in-laws and her desire to fulfil it and not shrink away from it turns her revolt into affirmation. Hence, Deshpande here gives a new dimension to assertion or ambition which leads to revolt against tradition. She stresses that affirmation does not mean shrinking one’s duties and responsibilities; rather it is fulfilling these with courage.

Leela is aware of her needs and the goals she has been aspiring for. Therefore, she fights against all odds and restrictions to achieve them. She works as a social worker and nurses TB patients. During the freedom struggle, she plunges into the Quit India movement and is also sent to jail. After independence, she protests against price hikes. Thus, all her life Leela tries to fulfil the desires of her true self irrespective of the limitations of tradition. In her personal life too, she revolts against tradition and being a Brahmin widow dares to fall in love with a Christian. She marries him after fifteen years. Her decision to marry Joe after years of waiting for Joe’s daughter, Paula’s consent shows her resolve and her determination to attain her identity. Joe and Leela’s belief in each other and the love they share make them marry each other in spite of Paula’s objection. Hence, in spite of the barriers of caste, religion, tradition, language, lifestyle and a hostile child, they find fulfilment in each other. Thus, through her determination Leela attains self-realization and fulfilment in the love and companionship of Joe. After his death, she finds herself a little lost. It is her awareness of the needs of self that makes her a more understanding person. She understands Madhu’s need to live alone in the hostel during holidays or her desires to work and live independently. However, it is Leela, who reaches the stage of self-realization. All her life, she has striven to attain
various demands of self and her persistent pursuit of these eventually earns her happiness and contentment.

Indu of *Shadows* is not only an educated young woman, but also a highly sensitive too. She starts aspiring to become independent and complete in her self. But then, she finds the woman dominant Akka and even the family to be an hindrance in achieving her goal of attaining independence and completeness. Akka doesn’t allow her to meet the boy in the lone corner of the library and speaks ill of her mother. Indu leaves the house and later marries Jayant, a man of her own choice. Thus, she leaves one house and enters another to have independence, completeness and joy. But, soon she realizes the futility of her search. In her own words : “Jayant and I… I wish I could say we have achieved complete happiness. But I cannot fantasize” (RS 14). As for achieving completeness in herself, she speaks thus :

> This is my real sorrow. That I can never be complete in myself. Until I had met Jayant, I had not known it... That there was somewhere outside me, a part of me without which I remained incomplete. Then I met Jayant. And lost the ability to be alone. (RS 34)

Indu is always haunted by the fear of failure. She is obsessed with her identity. In fact, as Jayant has become a threat to her identity, she goes to Naren. However, Manjari Shukla in *Roots and Shadows* : A Small-Scale Forsyte Saga” observes :

> With all her so-called modern ways and rationality that Indu had been so proud of, she cannot avoid the trap of convention. She discovers to her consternation and dismay that she herself, in spite of all her fiery self-
importance and zeal for guarding her identity, is an anachronism. Even love through which she had sought liberation had gradually fallen into place leading to invisible but extremely excruciating cracks and chasm in her relationship with Jayant. (104)

Indu describes herself as an anachronism, especially on the sexual plane. She is “A woman who loves her husband too much […] and is ashamed of it (RS 92). She interprets her relation with her husband, Jayant, thus: “We’re on different planes. He chooses his level. And I … try to choose the one he would like me to be on. It humiliates me” (RS 90). R. Mala in “Sexual predicament and Shashi Deshpande’s Women” observes: “Sexual alienation sets in when she does not want to show her love for him physically lest it might shock him to find a woman taking the initiative in the sexual act. This sexual paralysis deepens when she pretends to be passive and unresponsive. She defies tradition to marry him, she remains sexually a conservative, unable to transcend the sexual taboos” (53). J. Bhavani in “Nirdvandra : Individuation and Integration as Heroine’s Quest in Shashi Deshpande’s Fiction” also says that “Indu’s journey to individuation begins with her role of the submissive wife. Indu’s husband Jayant believes that passion makes a woman unwomanly and expects Indu to be submissive even in the sexual act. Her disappointment in having to don a mask even in such an intimate relationship causes a rift with Jayant” (23). She becomes a mythical figure. She has to share the fate of Sisyphus as G.D. Barche in “Indu : Another Sisyphus in Roots and Shadows” says that “Indu, a central character in Roots and Shadows, shares the fate of Sisyphus. Her crime is the revelation of long hidden inner world of women in general and Indian women in particular. She is suffering in our world and her
suffering is deeper and deadlier than Sisyphus’s as he was to roll up only one stone, while she is rolling up many, viz., the idea of independence and completeness, the concepts of self, sin, love, the ideal of detachment and freedom, and so on” (111). Deshpande has highlighted the inner struggle and sufferings of the new class of Indian woman through the character of Indu. She has raised many basic problems relating to the educated, modern, sensitive, young woman rooted in and shaped by the Indian customs, culture and traditions. Indu ridicules Atya’s idea of not saying one’s husband’s name as it shortens his life and of circumambulating Tulsi and praying for husband’s life. But then she realizes that she is not different from Atya-like women as she also wishes “that Jayant should be with her. Always all the time, forever” (RS 36). Only her reasons for thinking so are different. She had also aspired to assert her “I.” But after marriage it occurs to her that whatever she was doing, viz., looking in the mirror, dressing, undressing all, she was doing for Jayant. And this bitter fact of shedding her “I”, her identity, in her husband’s, frightens her. The paradox is that she is not happy with Jayant, but she can’t live without him. She has achieved completeness with Jayant, but she doesn’t want it.

At one point in the novel, when Naren tries to make love with her, she declares: “I’m essentially monogamous. For me, it’s one man and one man alone” (RS 89). But, later, she offers herself to him twice. And then the question hangs how she will view this act of adultery. After the act, she goes to her bed, but then deliberately avoids sleeping as that would erase “the intervening period and what happened between Naren and her” (RS 167). She thinks it no sin, no crime to make love with other person and wonders: “why did we make such a monstrous thing out of this?” She feels exalted to think: “there was
nothing I couldn’t do” (RS 169). But this bravado is short-lived. The next day, she starts thinking of the enormity of what she had done. Her mind is projected thus:

Adultery… What nuances of wrong doing… no, it needs the other stronger word… What nuances of sin the word carries. I will now brood on my sin, be crushed under a weight of guilt and misery. (RS 170)

Later on, she starts musing over the reason for giving Naren her body. And further, her mind on the matter of sin and right and wrong can be seen as under:

Apart from wronging Jayant? Wronging Jayant? I winced at the thought. But had I not wronged Jayant even before this? By pretending, by giving him spurious coin instead of the genuine kind? I had cheated him of my true self. That, I thought, is dishonourable, dishonest, much more than this, what I have done with Naren. (RS 188)

As for love, she doesn’t believe in it. To her, there is no such thing as love, at least in real life. Of course, it may exist in books and movies. According to her, it is a big fraud. It is not the greatest and the only thing in life.

Like Saru in Terrors, who has to grieve over the death of her brother, Dhruva, which caused her mother to neglect her throughout her life, Urmi in Vine is grieving over the death of her young daughter, Anu. She nourishes the pain within her. There is no way she can move out of this anguish. Vanaa wants her to talk about it. She says: “Anything just speak, Don’t keep it bottled up within you. Why don’t you cry, Urmi? It’s unnatural not to cry” (BV 13). She is notable to cry or to feel for others or to be moved by Vanaa’s weeping or Kishore’s tears. Urmi wonders at this silence that has
inhabited her. She admits: “I know nothing can undo what happened, nothing can bring Anu back to me. And I know I have to go back to living. Why do I say ‘go back’? I am living… Just give me time, for God’s sake, give me some more time, I can’t bear people looking at me as if I’m – something abnormal. As if grief has pitted my skin or something” (BV 22). She is unable to forget her because her memories haunt Urmi. She fights with the memories but also realizes that forgetting is betrayal: “I must reject these memories, I have to conquer them. This is one battle I have to win if I am to go on living. And yet my victory will carry with it the taint of betrayal. So forget is to betray” (BV 21). The untimely death of Anu comes as a serious shock to the maternal sensibility of Urmi. After Anu’s death a sense of guilt grips her own psyche and conscience. S. Indira in “A Bond or Burden: A Study of Shashi Deshpande’s The Binding Vine” says:

Instead of fighting her pain and sorrow, she holds on to it as she believes that to let go that pain, let it become a thing of the past would be a betrayal and would make her lose Anu completely. Like a masochist, she clings to her pain and allows her memories of Anu, every small incident to flood her with longing and a great sense of loss. (22)

Urmi notices the difference in handing over of Mira’s property to her. When Akka hands over little bits of Mira’s jewellary, she says: “They are Kishore’s mother’s… I kept them for his wife”, but when she hands over the books and diaries of Mira, she says, “Take this, it’s Mira’s. She did not mention Kishore at all, as if she was now directly linking me with Mira” (BV 48). It is indicative of woman’s space and
identity in the society. She is given the role either as a wife or as a mother, which in a sense erases her real self and imposes another alien self on her. The difference made by Akka symbolizes that the poems and diaries are self-actualizing whose identities are not dependent on men. So that only S. Indira in “A Bond or a Burden? A Study of Shashi Deshpande’s The Binding Vine” makes a bold statement that the novel “touches a chord in every woman as she responds to it with a recognition of her own doubts, complexes, fears, desires, and suffering being mirrored in the narration of Urmila, the protagonist. As Urmila wades through the labyrinth of relationships, she witnesses, experiences and analyzes the confusion and guilt, the pain and anger, the joy and suffering – an entire emotional tornado surfacing in her turbulent journey” (21).

In Vine, there are several mother-daughter relationships, Inni and Urmi, Urmi and Anu, Akka and Vanaa, Vanaa and her two daughters, even Mira’s relationship with her mother. There is also the relationship between Priti and her mother. Shakutai’s relationship with her two daughters and her younger sister. Sulu is also a part of the narrative, and offers a depiction of relationships as they work through different economic levels.

Just as families are knit through relationships and bonds of common space and experience, they are disrupted through extramarital relationships, death, childlessness, and betrayal. A monogamous marriage with the possibility of procreation is the basis of family life. The assumption of such a basis automatically gives motherhood a degree of importance. Urmi feels that social structures “brainwash us into this motherhood thing. They make it so mystical and emotional when the truth is that its all just a myth” (BV
76). Urmi’s own feelings themselves belie her views. She constantly misses her dead daughter. She has framed her mother with a rigid image of an indifferent, neglectful mother.

In *Shadows*, Indu wants to be detached or lonely. She always wants to be like Naren, who is completely detached and remains non-involved like Sindi Oberoi of Arun Joshi’s *The Foreigner*. Always, she used to wonder whether she would reach the stage of no passions and ambitions and being satisfied. To her surprise, she finds herself engaged and involved and even attached in many ways. She begins to expect too much from Jayant. It results in frustration. She admits: “I am grading expectations. Each month, everyday. I expect less and less and less from… why can’t I compromise for what can give… deep affection, yes: total, absolute commitment” (RS 61).

The exaggerated importance assigned to a woman in terms of virginity is also responsible to a great extent in enforcing strict restrictions on her movements as soon as she reaches the age of puberty and as the girl matures, her mother's authority weighs more heavily upon her. Indu bitterly recollects how cruelly the idea of her womanhood was thrust upon her:

My womanhood ... I had never thought of it until the knowledge had been thrust brutally, gracelessly on me the day I had grown up. ‘You're a woman now’, Kaki had told me. ‘You can have babies yourself’. I, a woman? My mind had flung off the thought with an amazing swiftness. I was only a child ... And then, she had gone on to tell me, badly, cruelly, how I could have a baby. And I, who had all the child's
unselfconsciousness about my own body, had, for the first time, felt an immense hatred for it. ‘And don't forget’, she had ended, 'for four days' now you are unclean. You can't touch anyone or anything.’ (RS 79)

She starts fighting against her womanhood. She hates the utter femininity of the girl's hostel where she resides, and narrates the incidents that reveal the tactlessness of her relatives in that period of traumatic, pubertal transitions. The idea that her body is unclean has been planted in her mind. Indu develops an aversion to the natural biological functions of the female as mother and has an apathy towards bearing a child. She develops a vague sense of guilt and feels that her womanhood closes so many doors for her. It is as Simone De Beauvoir observes: “For an adolescent girl, her first menstruation reveals this meaning and her feeling of shame appears. If they were already present, and they are strengthened and exaggerated from this time on” (335). Indu differs from Narmada Atya, Kaki, Sumitra, Kamala, Sunanda and Kaku who follow tradition as a virtue. They strongly believe in age-old conventions and practices. She also differs from Mini, who, though educated, lacks will power and hence, sacrifices her individuality. Though Mini is deeply aware of her peculiar position, she makes no efforts to come out of the tangles of the society and be independent. Indu, on the other hand, rebels against the narrow conventions and more particularly, the tyrannical authority of Akka on matters of education, love and marriage. She reacts: " ... there was only one thing she wanted and that was to dominate" (RS 68), and for her it is "A Declaration of Independence" (RS 68).
Defying the traditional role she is expected to play, Indu seeks fulfilment in education and career. She works as a journalist for a woman's magazine but gives it up out of disgust for writing only about women and their problems and starts working for another magazine. Indu explains the reason for shift:

Women, women, women ... I got sick of it. There was nothing else. It was a kind of narcissism. And as if we had locked ourselves in a cage and thrown away the key. I couldn't go on. (RS 78)

Indu strives to seek a new environment where nobody, especially people like Akka, can exercise their wills on her. Marriage teaches Indu only hypocrisy. She learns “to reveal to Jayant nothing but what he wanted to seek, nothing but what he wanted to hear” (RS 41). Her longing to be her true self culminates in her intimacy with Naren. Naren’s death seals it in secrecy. K. Meera Bai in “Tradition and Modernity : The Portrayal of Women by Women Writers” observes : “Now apart from her true self, she has an extra guilt to be hidden from Jayant. Indu’s unconventionality does not help her either to reach out to Jayant or to achieve self-fulfilment. Indu’s character portrays the predicament of a woman who faces the pull of the opposite forces – that of the society that expects a woman to conform to its norms and the restive woman who longs for the expression of her true self” (45).

In her quest for personhood and fulfillment, Indu had sought escape from family relationships. but discovered how relationships are the roots of one's being and follow one like so many shadows that make life no more substantial than a shadow-a life without identity. Indu's flight from family relationships had only landed her in another trap of
shadow existence waiting for her in the person of Jayant. "I've got away. But to what? ... to what have I got away? Is that any better than this?" (RS 76) she asks Naren referring to her relationship with Jayant. Anguished, she wonders: "Are we doomed to living meaningless futile lives? Is there no escape?" (RS 176).

In marrying Jayant, Indu had thought that she had found her alter ego. She had found in him a spiritual and psychological level of closeness. She tells: "I had become complete. I had felt incomplete, not as a woman, but as a person. And in Jayant, I had thought I had found the other part of my whole self" (RS 26). But marriage with Jayant had forced her to realize that self is an elusive centre, that one could never exchange roots with another. This was an illusion, a chimera and felt cheated.

Marriage threatened to rob Indu of herself. She knew that the ultimate truth was one's ownself, and that's what really matters. Indu was also aware of the savage truth that without wants there was no "I." She could only say, "I don't know, old Uncle .... I don't know what I want" (RS 116) "Marriage makes one so dependent. . . . When I look in the mirror, I think of Jayant. When I dress, I think of Jayant, When I undress, I think of him. . . . Always what he wants. What he would like. What would please him" (RS 54). Indu's agony is rooted in her intellectual dilemma of knowing "what I had was nothing" and of not knowing "what I had to have. " (RS 17)

The root cause of all her psychological problems; of feelings of not only futility, but of utter vacuity, of emptiness, and of nothingness, in the midst of nothingness, is her love-hate relationship with Jayant. Jayant "whom she wanted, and at the same moment hated for wanting so much," (RS 66) had swept her off her feet in their very first meeting
and given her a feeling of solidity and certainty, a feeling of having found her alter ego. Instead, marriage to him had compelled in her a duality of life. "I had found in myself," she confesses, "an immense capacity for deception…I hid my responses and emotions as if they were bits of garbage." (RS 41). Marriage suppresses her femininity and her human demands. Marriage denies her fullness of experience. It forces Indu to declare that Naren alone would be able to reach across the barriers she had built round herself. She experiences an intense moment of extra-marital love, a moment of love that reaches her to the roots of her being and awakens her feminine consciousness to the core of her femininity with Naren. It makes her declare that "Love is a big fraud, a hoax, that's what it is .... It's false. The sexual instinct ... that's true. The maternal instinct that's true too. Self-interest, self-love, they're the basic truths “ (RS 173).

Indu is only human in her distaste for love that is not real and absurd. To her, it lacks the humanizing influence in the context of marriage in a masculine civilization, a civilization that perpetuates myths created by male-oriented societies and makes marriage for the female partner, both physically and spiritually, dissatisfying. Indu confesses the moral risks of a woman caught in the trap of a love marriage with a traditional culture created by man of restrictive social code. Indu articulates her sexual confusion:

Jayant ... too expected me to submit. No, not expected. He took it for granted that I would. And I did it, because I told myself, I loved him. As if that justified everything. As if the word took away the taint from the deed. And remembering how I surrendered to him step by step I realize now, that it was not for love, as I had been telling myself, but
because I did not want conflict. The hideous ghost of my cowardice confronted me as I thought of this... that I had clung tenaciously to Jayant, to my marriage, not for love alone, but because I was afraid of failure. I had to show them that my marriage, that I was a success. Show whom? The world. The family of course. And so I went on lying, even to myself, compromising, shedding bits of myself along the way which meant that I who had despised Devdas for being a coward, was the same thing myself. I had killed myself as surely as he had done. (RS 174-175)

Indu's love-marriage degenerates into a mere psychological affair that makes her feel "as if there was something shameful in total commitment." (RS 143) and as if she has abused her body's sanctity. Jayant, the archetypal Indian husband, is shocked "to find passion in a woman. It puts him off. When I'm like that," Indu laments, "he turns away from me." (RS 91-92). By refusing to accept Indu's real self, her human self, Jayant forces in her a state of armed neutrality to life with him and mars the felicity of their relationship. She explains her frustration, her disappointment and her humiliation to Naren, the only person to whom she can open up: "I've learnt my lesson now. And so I pretend I'm passive. And unresponsive. I am still and dead. . . . Not a pure woman. Not a too faithful wife. But an anachronism. A woman who loves her husband too much. Too passionately and is ashamed of it" (RS 92).

Indu feels suffocated and disintegrated in a marriage that fails to render her physical or emotional gratification. Marriage denies her fullness of experience. It is the
same with Saru. Asha Susan Jacob in “Voice of the Silenced: A Reading of Shashi Deshpande’s Novels” observes: “Sandwiched between tradition and modernity, illusion and reality, Saru finds her rebellious love-marriage deteriorating to a mere mechanical affair when she is forced to curb herself as if there is something shameful in total commitment” (133). It results in emotional polarity as she suffers from pain, anger, frustration and disappointment in her marital life.

Indu has to settle the marriage of Mini. In fact, Mini stands as a foil to Indu. She accepts her home confined spaces with a limited horizon of life. In spite of her own dreams, Mini is destined to accept the challenges of marriage without personal vision and voice. Deshpande accepts that in traditional framework, marriage is more a social obligation than being related with the choices of individual. In fact “Mini’s silent submission to the decisions made by the elders of the family stirs several questions in the mind of Indu and it leads her to the retrieval of her own past with the trail of anguish under which she made struggle to break the bondages of personal relationship and her relationship with Jayant” (Agarwal 52). Indu realizes that marriage is not an option to a woman. It is always chosen by men. Indu realizes: “A woman’s life… contained no choices. And my life especially in this house, I had seen the truth of it. The woman had no choice but to submit and accept. And I had often wondered… have they been born without wills, or have their wills atrophied through a life time of disuse” (RS 6). It is as Beena Agarwal in Mosaic of the Fictional World of Shashi Deshpande observes: “In spite of her external grace, assertiveness and urge for freedom, she failed to come out of barriers in which she was placed by nature and the tradition of society” (53). In a traditional set up, an ideal woman does not have an identity of her own. She is “A
woman who sheds her ‘I’ who loses her identity in her husband’s” (RS 54). The new generation reviews everything. Indu analyses the ideal of detachment and freedom and tries to achieve these. She tries to listen to the voice of her own, her own conscience and consciously revolts against tradition. “But, unfortunately, in all her efforts, she fails miserably either due to the impact of the culture and tradition, or fear of stigma, or timidity, or all these combined together” (Sandhu 28). It results in rejecting everything. She wants to explore her inner self. Indu undergoes in introspection. Prasanna Sree Sathupati in “Conflict and Identity in Shashi Deshpande’s Novels” says that “Shashi Deshpande’s heroines reject rituals that are vestiges of the past. Indu wanted to explore the inner struggle of herself. She represents a set of the modern women who are educated and are very much in contact with the society, dealing with the critical problems like love, sex, marriage, settlement and individuality. Indu reviews everything with reason. She analyses the ideals of detachment and freedom and tries to achieve them. She tries to listen to the voice of her conscience and revolts” (16).

In Indu’s ancestral home, the partition between male and female worlds is always sharp. Women are not allowed to join family discussions, not even Akka in her heyday. But Indu just thrusts herself upon others when there is a discussion about how the big house is to be maintained and, if possible, as to how Akka's money left to her is to be distributed. Although Indu is an educated, successful journalist, it is not without opposition that they admit her to that discussion. To them, she is just a woman, more so a married woman, an outsider. To them, she has no right to inherit either money or property because she is a married woman. Since she is a woman, she is always marked. Among the uneducated women folk, she is a childless woman (although she and her husband opt
out of getting children for personal and domestic reasons), no matter how educated she is and how successful she is in her profession.

As long as society remains patriarchal in its role allocation and division of labour, the culture of the second sex is bound to be eclipsed. When stereotyping of women in any form and any shape is noticed, Indu does not forget to remind all people around her that she has grown up, implying that she cannot be treated as par with other women in the family. A woman's mind is shaped by hammering constantly that she is weak both physically and mentally and is subordinate to man. In *Shadows*, the dominant culture and the marginalized culture are displayed as form of suppression by men. In fact, this enters the psychology of unconsciousness that subjects woman to silence so as she does not identify herself with the masculine imaginary. How far these positions are proven in feminine text can be seen here:

As a child, they had told me I must be obedient and unquestioning. As a girl, they had told me I must be meek and submissive. Why? I had asked. Because you are a female. You must accept everything, even defeat, with grace because you are a girl, they had said. It is the only way, they said, for a female to live and survive. And ... I had watched them and found it to be true. There had to be, if not the substance, at least the shadow of submission. But still, I had laughed at them, and sworn I would never pretend to be what I was not. (RS 158)

To Indu, the concept of a successful marriage is a hoax, and she insists that nothing should be judged. A perfect understanding is based on "Don't judge me. Don't criticize
me. Just appreciate me. See only my virtues, not my weaknesses" (RS 115). It is further strengthened by the opinions of Deshpande as she says in “On the Writing of a Novel”:

Indu sprang out of the claustrophobic world with a courage I admired. She was free. But often to be free is to be lonely. I shared this bleak thought with Indu. Even today, the smell of Bombay is to me the smell of loneliness. But there is always the beacon light of love. And love leads to the certainty of marriage, But marriage invariably takes you back to the world of women, of trying to please, of the fear of not-pleasing, of surrender, of self-abnegation. To love another and to retain yourself intact is that possible? To assert yourself and not to be aggressive, to escape domination and not to dominate? ... Oh yes, you can't escape the shadows. The clearer the light, the darker the shadows. They follow you everywhere.

It was with a touch of malice that I sat back and watched Indu go in search of integrity. Only to realize that she lacked it herself; that it was there instead in those two she slightly despised—Akka and Naren. I knew how Indu felt about Naren when he shoved aside that slick, handsome young hero of mine and announced himself to me with a touch of childish arrogance—I'm the villain. I could almost hear him chortling gleefully at my chagrin, this irresponsible, malicious, sometimes cruel man. Villain? That's sheer bombast. But what is he mean? Indu's lover? Her alter ego? Her male counterpart? Only a male can be so detached. No woman ever
can achieve it. Even Meerabai was trammelled by her fierce emotions.

(35)

Indu is not able to bear with the suffering she has to face in the family and therefore breaks away from it and marries Jayant. “Her feeling of isolation from the milieu is almost Camusque […]” (Swain, 88). Indu suffers from total disorientation and isolation. As a woman, she is hardly left with choices. S.P. Swain in “Roots and Shadows : A Feminist Study” points out that “A woman’s role is not only confined to the centripetal needs of the family in which she lives but also to its centrifugal needs. It is here that a woman has to be more than a submissive housewife” (88). Indu recognizes her displacement and marginalization as a woman. She feels that the authoritative and dominating male has not only suppressed the female voice but also brought silence, dullness, and repulsion to the houses women live in. Women like Indu can neither express themselves nor choose for themselves. They can neither love nor hate but content with silence. “Indu plays the role of an ideal housewife but the role of a wife restricts, rather circumscribes, her self-development – firstly, by taking away her freedom of thought, art expression, and secondly, by denying her the scope of giving free play to her artistic potential” (Swain, 91).

Indu is not only the heiress to her great aunt Akka’s fortune, but also a writer in her own right. The novel makes several significant and conflicting statements through the choice of the heiress. She has given evidence of her ability to decide and to hold out on her own. “The fact that a woman has been chosen over all the possible male heirs is also symbolic of the swift in gender roles” (Jain, Gendered Realities 36).
Indu is a New woman in her role. Against the traditional role of a woman, she as a New woman uses words such as ‘kiss’, ‘rape’, ‘deflowered’ and ‘orgasm’ (RS 78). She flirts with Naren. Indu says to Naren:

We’re gay and whimsical about our own people, our own country. We are rational, unprejudiced, broadminded. We discuss intelligently, even solemnly, the problems of unemployment, poverty, corruption, family planning. We scorn the corrupt, we despise the ignorant, we have the wicked… And our hearts bleed. Naren, for Vietnam, for the blacks, for the Harijans… But frankly we care a damn. Not one goddam about anything but our own precious selves, our own précis walled-in lives. (RS 25)

A number of variations on the theme of man-woman relationships come up in the periphery of the plot structure. There is Vanaa’s mother Akka, who was married by her father just to look after Mira’s motherless baby and who knew about her husband’s obsession for his first wife. The readers are told nothing of her feelings for him, except that she wept uncontrollably on reading Mira’s poems which spoke of her revulsion for her husband. Urmi’s own mother, Inni, was totally dominated by her husband. Urmi had been brought up by her paternal grandparents and she had always wondered why parents had sent her away, while they kept her brother at home. Inni tells her, long after Urmi became a mother herself, that she had once left Urmi in the care of the old family retainer Diwakar, whom she knew could be trusted. But her husband could only see that Urmi had been left alone with a man and it was to punish his wife for that single error that he had
not permitted her to bring up her daughter after that. Yet, Inni had been devoted to her husband, and he too had loved her.

Similarly, Vanaa, who is of Urmi's own generation, is married to a doctor, Harish, who makes a fetish of order and regularity. Vanaa is conditioned to cater to his rigid time-tables like a puppet and she gets very annoyed if Urmi teases her about it. Vanaa cannot understand how Urmi can think of publishing Mira's poems, because that would be beating Kishore's parents. But, Urmi feels that she owes it to Mira to publish her story, just as she had publicized Kalpana's in the newspapers. Deshpande seems to imply that only by breaking woman's long silence many taboos and restrictions can be overthrown.

Most women marry because they are expected to do so. Society expects them to get married, "bear children, to have sons and then grandchildren" (RS 128). They also marry for economic security. When Mini has the option of choosing between Naren, a sensitive young man but a no-gooder in social terms, and an elderly coarse widower, both she and her mother reject Naren. Kaki measures the bridegroom's worth in terms of the property that he owns (RS 132). It is immaterial whether he is likeable or not. Indu tries to bring home to Mini the reality of living together: "You have to listen to him, endure his habits, his smell, his touch, his likes, his dislikes. You have to sleep with him, bear him children. Can you do all that with this man?" Mini's only reply is, "What choice have I, Indu?" (RS 137). Others before her had tolerated ugly and tyrant husbands. Akka, who was a child bride and was married to a man much older than her, a "tall bulky man, with large coarse features" and was punished and starved for trying to escape him,
is only one such example. There are other married relationships in the novel, but except for Indu's, the others are described from the outside, and work at the descriptive level. In most of them, the claims that women make on their husbands are on economic grounds and their happiness is sustained by the decency of their husbands. Within the household, they exercise full control but their sexual and emotional needs are not taken into account. It is as Hari Prasanna, while commenting on the relationship between Indu and Jayant, says:

Unable to come to terms with either her love for Jayant or her true self, Indu finds herself stifled and suppressed. Her marriage, she finds, is robbing her of her identity as a person apart and separate from her husband. Feeling entrapped yet she hesitates to come out of her entanglements. Her realization that she too is being moulded into the very image of woman she tried to break away from, worries her. In the first place she has broken from her family because she wanted to prove herself to be as different from and as unlike as possible from women like Akka. It is her sole reason for her rebelling against the family norms and marrying Jayant. But marriage to Jayant does not prove to be the heaven she hopes for and dreams of. Not even that of finding an ‘alter ego’. Instead she finds she has lost her identity as a person in the process of becoming a wife and surrendering to Jayant. She submits rather willingly to the demands of marriage and shapes herself up to the dictates and expectations of her husband. She admits reluctantly that the fault is hers and not her husband's. (37)
Indu has to go back to her parental home. She has to brood over the past. She has to settle her life on her own accord and will. Commenting on Indu’s homecoming Jasbir Jain in *Gendered Realities, Human Spaces: The Writing of Shashi Deshpande* says: “Indu’s homecoming is essential for her own growth; the legacy is the tribute of one strong woman to another” (36). Indu struggles hard to understand the reality, the actual cause which is destroying her marital life. She feels that her sense of certainty, confidence, and assurance is being destroyed in the presence of Jayant. Jayant never bothers to understand what she really wants and what her feelings are. There is no real communication between them. She is willing to wound but afraid to strike. So, in the end of her struggle, instead of leaving Jayant, she goes back to him. Her mind unrolls as follows:

> go back to Jayant. What kind of a life can you build on a foundation of dishonesty… Now I would go back and see that home could stand the scorching touch of honesty. Nevertheless I knew I would not tell Jayant about Naren and me. (RS 205)

Indu has to go back to Jayant. It is a state of becoming to her. It is to achieve her identity. It is to perceive her real self-the womanish self. She has to exist for Jayant and for others. In that case, she forsakes herself. Commenting on Indu’s realization, S.P. Swain in “*Roots and Shadows*: A Feminist Study” observes:

> Indu's problematic of ‘becoming’ expresses Deshpande's feminist polemics against sexual and gender roles imposed upon women in a patriarchal malist culture. Such 'relative identity', or rather the received
role models', distort and problematize her self-perception. Such a world reduces women like Indu to a mere thing or a mindless body, for her feminine instinct for articulation is suppressed. Ever ready to please Jayant, Indu acquiesces to his desires. Indu gradually realises that she doesn't exist for her but for Jayant, the archetypal male, imperialistic and subjugating. (94)

However, Indu in her angst and insecurity expresses her grief at the family:

This is my family. These are my people, And yet. .. I hate them. I despise them. They're mean and petty and trivial and despicable. I had always told myself ... I won't be like them. I won't live like them. And I thought... I've got away. But to what, Naren? ... Are we doomed to living meaningless, futile lives? Is there no escape? I'm afraid, Naren .... I'm afraid ... (RS 160)

"Indu ultimately realises that she has been chasing shadows, leaving her roots far behind in the family and in Jayant. Naren, with whom she develops an adulterous relationship, is nothing more than a mere shadow to her. He has no permanent place in her memory. Hence, she decides to go back to Jayant. It is she, she feels, who is to blame for the marital discord in their lives. She has created a hell out of a heaven" (Swain 94). She realises that marriage had stunted and hampered her individuality because she had regarded it as a 'trap' and not a bond. Now she realises:

But what of my love for Jayant, that had been a restricting bond, tormenting me, which I had so futilely struggled against? Restricting
bond? Was it not I who made it so? Torment? Had I not created my own torment? Perhaps it was true. There was only one thing I wanted now ... and that was to go home the one I lived with Jayant. That was my only home .... I would put all this behind me and go back to Jayant. ... I knew I would not tell Jayant about Naren and me .... That had nothing to do with the two of us and our life together. But there were other things I had to tell him. That I was resigning from my job. That I would do the kind of writing I had always dreamt of doing. (RS 187)

“Thus, Indu's uncompromising and paradoxical feminine self that frantically longed for self-expression, finally finds its roots in the home and with her husband. Shadows disappear from her vision and she sees the clear light of day with the realization and discovery of her authentic female self” (Swain 95).

The meek, docile and humble Indu of the early days finally emerges as a bold, challenging, conscious and rebellious woman. She resigns her job, thus defying the male authority, hierarchy and the irony of a woman's masked existence. Her self-discovery is the frightening vision of the feminine self's struggle for harmony and sanity. She comes out of her emotional upheaval and decides to lead a meaningful life with her husband. The home she had discarded becomes the place of refuge, of solace and consolation. It is Akka's house which offers her ample opportunities to know herself. It is here that she is able to discover her roots as an independent woman, a daughter, a mother and a commercial writer.
Indu becomes an inheritor of Akka’s spirit also. She has already possessed some of Akka’s qualities – her indomitable will, domineering personality, and obstinacy. Even though she rejected Akka as a role model, she consciously / unconsciously harboured those qualities within her. She wriggled herself free of her mother – surrogate’s orthodoxy, tyranny, and fanaticism. Akka had maintained her power, her authority over every one till her death. Indu too would “dominate, as much as Akka had ever done” (RS 150). The house becomes a trap. It had bound her to the past. Now it does the same to Indu. P. Ramamoorthi in “My Life is My Own : A Study of Deshpande’s Women” says that “Indu has confronted her real self and she knows her roots; she need not be ashamed of her body and sexual needs; she has to decide what her job will be; she is capable of taking decision not only for herself but others too, and life does not come to an end with individuals, be it Indu or Jayant” (47). Commenting on Indu’s second coming to her parental home, Beena Agarwal also in Mosaic of the Fictional World of Shashi Deshpande says : “Indu’s shift from familial spaces to self chosen marital circumferences and her further returning to her parental home suggests that a woman conceives her freedom not in isolation but in acceptance of the wider social order. In the last phase of the novel after Naren’s death and Indu’s return to her home suggests that from illusion she turn (sic) back to reality” (65). In her attempt to liberate herself from the age-old customs of the male-dominated and tradition-bound society, Indu, as observed by Shivani R. Upadhyay in “Deception and Dualities in Shashi Deshpande’s Roots and Shadows” [...] “moves like a pendulum between tradition and modernity, acceptance and rejection, flexibility and rigidity, fantasy and reality and above all revolt and compromise. She lives with dualities” (47). She decides to go back and face the
reality. It is as Amar Nath Prasad in “Gender Discrimination in Roots and Shadows: A Critical Study” observes:

It is to be noted here that Indu tries to prove to the world that she is an individual and not a beast and so she has power to achieve her goal for fulfillment and independence. She thinks that she is fearful due to the dominance of patriarchy in her life which she wants to brush aside. Her fighting, aggressive and asserting nature makes her realize that until and unless the roots which stands for patriarchy and conservative outlook is eradicated she cannot obtain fulfillment. Therefore, she makes upper mind to destroy the roots, strives to gain her solidity with courage. (9)

In the end of the novel, Indu achieves her freedom. She had not let anyone, neither Kaka nor Atya, nor even Jayant come in the way of doing what she believed was the right thing to do. She conquered her fears and achieved harmony in life. She refused to be influenced by Jayant. P. Bhatnagar in “Indian Womanhood: Fight for Freedom in Roots and Shadows” says: “Thus Shashi Deshpande makes her heroine choose security through reconciliation. The ethos in the novel is neither of victory nor of defeat but of harmony and understanding between two opposing ideals and conflicting selves” (128). Manjari Shukla in “Roots and Shadows: A Small-Scale Forsyte Saga” concludes:

Thus Indu is a deeply schizophrenic character, and since she represents a whole generation the schizophrenia extends to that generation as well. Freedom from the past has brought no respite to this generation because the past cannot be shaken off so easily. It has tendency to stick whether
you are conscious of it or not. With all her freedom, fastidiousness and power Indu has a nagging sense of loneliness and futility. But this is no existential angst; this is the pain which follows when one abandons one’s roots. No one can live in a vacuum and in the midst of ‘shadows’. Indu hankers after detachment, which, she wrongly believes, comes by renouncing one’s duties and responsibilities. (105)

Indu becomes an example of a common woman in an Indian society. K.V. Raghupathi in “Self-assertion of Woman : Shashi Deshpande’s Roots and Shadows” is of the opinion that “Though the novel gains its feminist stance it goes beyond the limits of feminism and touches the very predicament of human existence. Though Deshpande provides ‘the compromise attitude’ for Indu towards the end, the whole novel deals with the existential dilemma of a typical modern middle-class woman. The existential trauma, conflict and anguish faced by Indu in the novel can be ascribed to any woman in the society” (130). That is why Indu shares many a common types / traits of Indian woman found in Indian Writing in English. S. Prasanna Sree in Woman in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande compares Indu to so many characters of Nayantara Sahgal. She says : “But, Indu is more or less akin to Nayantara Sahgal’s women – Kusum of A Time to Be Happy, Rashmi of This Time of Morning, Saroj of Storm in Chandigarh, Simrit of A Day in Shadow and Sonali of Rich Like Us – for whom freedom does not merely signify the defiance of old-established traditions and conventions but in reality it lies in becoming aware of oneself as an individual” (28). Indu in her quest to be independent realizes security in life through reconciliation. Indu passes from age old cultural modes to the new socio-economic forces. Indu represents a woman torn between age-old traditions and
individual views. Her search for freedom results in her emergence as a bold and challenging woman of determination.

In Vine, Urmi has developed a kind of super ego in herself which denies her to submit before her husband, Kishore. Even, she cannot bear the submission of Vanaa before her spouse. It is as Nisha Trivedi in “Treatment of Love, Marriage and Sex in The Binding Vine” observes: “The denial of submission lies in the fact that Urmi wants to assert herself. She has to reject Kishore and this can be done by escaping from the tailored roles of women. Though she succeeds in escaping her culture bound role by not using the money Kishore sends her to run the family, yet she cannot go away from her nature-bound role, specially the role of the sex-partner” (143). Urmi finds that the bond between her and her husband is not that of love. Urmi feels that Kishore asserts himself sexually like that of Manu of Terrors who physically violates Saru, the doctor woman. Urmi confesses:

Sex is only a temporary answer. I came out of it to find that the lights had come back... ‘Go to sleep’, he said. He was kneeling by me, his face close to mine, but the closeness was only physical. His voice was cold. I could see the goose bumps on his shoulders, his chest. I did not look into his face. I was afraid of what I would see. I turned around and fell asleep.

(BV 140)

It results in alienation. It makes her proclaim a strong assertion: “There is something in him I will never reach. I have lived with the hope that some day I will. Each relationship, always imperfect, survives on hope. Am I to give up this hope?” (BV 141).
In her case, marriage suppresses her demands and denies her fullness of expression. It drives her to be close to Bhaskar. She says: "And yet it seems to me that this responding to Bhaskar is the only way of releasing the mushy adolescent with dreams of living happily ever after with Kishore, who’d trapped inside me, of finding out what’s left when she’s gone" (BV 165-166).

Besides portraying gender discrimination and violence against woman in *Shadows*, Indu reflects upon marriage, saying: "What was marriage after all, but two people brought together after the cold-blooded bargaining to meet, mate and reproduce so that the generations might continue" (RS 3). In *Silence*, husband and wife are compared to "a pair of bullocks yoked together" (LS 7). In *Vine*, to Urmila the back of the bride's neck, nervously waiting for the first night, looks "like a lamb's waiting for the butcher's knife to come down upon it" (BV 63). Urmila calls arranged marriage an absolutely cold-blooded affair. Unable to assert herself, the woman keeps herself a slave to her husband and his family. Vanna's and Shakutai's marriages are examples of this. Urmila feels irritated at Vanna's submissiveness before her husband:

"You let him get away with you too much I tell her".

"What do you want me to do?"

"Assert yourself. You don't have to crawl before him, do you?"

"I don't crawl, I do what I want"

"No, you don't You're scared of him, yes you are. I've seen you" (BV 80)

Vanaa is really unable to assert before her husband even in matters where her say should be important. Soon after the birth of the second daughter, her husband decides to have no
more children although Vanna would have personally loved to have a son. "You should have told Harish that," says Urmila to Vanna, to which Vanna replies:

I did. And quoted population figures at me. And he said, one, surely I'm not the kind of woman who craves for sons, am I? And. two, what makes me think the next one will be a boy? He is right, only ... I wouldn't have minded taking a chance. (BV 81)

It is Vanna's face when she says this that makes Urmila furious, and she bursts out: "You let him bulldozer - you crawl before him" (BV 81).

The servile attitude of woman is hinted at through Shakutai's example also. Although she has been abandoned by her husband, she feels secret pleasure whenever he calls upon her. Dr. Bhaskar wonders: "What has she got out of marriage—except for the children, of course? And yet she's longing for her daughter's marriages" (BV 87). But Urmila does not wonder so. As a woman, she knows that for a girl there is something in the marriage. It offers security to her and safeguards her from other men. Urmila is not pessimistic about marriage. She is aware of the changing times and knows that girls will no longer be so submissive and will not marry against their likes. In Vine, Mira's diary entries show her molestation in marriage. Mira wrote:

But tell me, friend, did Laxmi too twist brocade tassels round the fingers and tremble, fearing the coming of the dark-clouded, engulfing night? (BV 66)
It is further highlighted in Urmi’s reading of Mira’s writings:

But I have my defences; I give him the facts, nothing more, never my feelings… and so it begins. ‘Please’, he says, ‘Please, I love you’. And over and over again until he has done ‘I love you’. ‘Love’. How I hate the word. If this is love it is a terrible thing. (BV 67)

It is clearly indicative of Mira’s psychological fears and physical sufferings of Mira. When Urmi wants to share Mira’s sufferings, she cannot share it with Vanaa. She confesses: “I cannot speak of Mira, of Mira’s writing, to her. That is another pocket of silence between us. One can never see one’s parent as a sexual being; he or she is merely a cardboard figure labeled ‘parent’” (BV 83). Urmi through Mira’s poems understands that man “tried to possess and other human being against her will” (BV 83). Mira wrote:

Don’t tread paths barred to you
Obey, never utter a ‘no’;
Submit and your life will be
a paradise, she said and blessed me. (BV 83)

It has its echoes in Terrors in Saru’s voice: “A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband… That’s the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage. Don’t ever try to reverse the doctor-nurse, executive-secretary, principal-teacher role” (DT 124).

In Shadows, Mini inculcates in her all the traditional feminine qualities since her childhood. Devoid of any aim in her life, she devotes herself to her family members. Mini’s obedience, silence, and submission never allows her to go beyond the rules and
regulations set by the family for girls. Brought up under supervision, guidance and restrictions, she becomes acquainted within the real duties of a girl at a very early age. Deshpande writes:

Mini had always been very much of a girl as expected to be, helping the women with small odd chores from a very young age, waiting on her father and brother and being generally docile. (RS 122)

Mini accepts the fact that women are devoid of choices. “And yet Mini, who had had no choice either, had accepted the reality, the finality with a grace and composure that spoke eloquently of that inner strength” (RS 6). Pallavi and Rashmi Gaur in “The Roots of Girlhood Casting Shadows on Womanhood: Shashi Deshpande’s Roots and Shadows” observe: “Women like Mini, who are always involved in the fetishes of traditions and household work, have no other option but to remain satisfied with the things provided. Women are also toned or conditioned to merge their aspirations and desires with those of their family. Mini too absorbs the trend established by the elder women of her family” (3). Mini desperately admits that for a woman, intelligence is a burden. Her marriage taught her the lesson to be silent. Even Akka faced all the challenges in silence. Even Indu learnt everything that Akka had learnt and used in her life.

Indu searches for release from the constraints of the traditional and tradition-bound institution of marriage in search of an autonomous self. Ujwala Patil in “The Theme of Marriage and Selfhood in Roots and Shadows” observes: “In her quest for personhood and fulfillment, Indu had sought escape from family relationships, but had discovered how relationships are the roots of one’s being and follow one like so many
shadows that make life no more substantial than a shadow – a life without identity. Indu’s flight from family relationships had only landed her in another trap of shadow existence waiting for her in the person of Jayant” (130-131). Being tied up in marriage with Jayant, “Indu who considers herself independent and intelligent, who is proud of her logical and rational thinking and who sets out to reform Indian womanhood, has become, after her marriage, one of those archetype submissive Indian women whose identity is only an extension of her husband’s” (Sree, Woman in the Novels of 31). Marriage has taught her things, like deception and pretentious show. Her desire to assert herself has driven her from affection to hypocrisy. Indu learns to repress her sexual desires. “While Jayant effectively desexualizes Indu in refusing to accept her sexual personality and indirectly moulds her identity according to his prescriptions, Indu articulates her sexual confusion” (Sree 32).

Urmi relates not only the story of Mira, but also the pathetic tale of Kalpana – a girl who becomes a prey to her own relative who molests her. Kalpana has been wronged by someone. She has also undergone severe head injury and is on the verge of death. Kalpana’s mother requests the doctor not to inform the police as she worried about her marriage, but Urmi soon realizes that woman like Kalpana’s mother finds security only in marriage. At least they are “safe from other men” (BV 88). In fact, Kalpana was raped by Prabhakar as her mother Sakutai wanted to give Kalpana to him in marriage but that was rejected by Kalpana. Prabhakar also had married Sulu. After the rape of Kalpana by Prabhakar, in order to avoid confession to the police Sulu committed suicide. Mrinalini Sebastian in The Enterprise of Reading Differently : The Novels of Shashi Deshpande in Postcolonial Arguments says:
The outside world, represented in the story of Kalpana, a victim of rape, justifies the personal crisis and finally convinces and strengthens the narrator’s own feelings. The narrator, Urmila, is a subalter if we consider her as a gendered subject. But she also occupies that in-between area where she is enabled to talk because of her class, her ‘education’, her role as a college lecturer, her unique position of being married but yet not being married […] (137)

Shakutai's tormented question to Urmi at their first meeting, "Why does God give us daughters?" (RS 60) only sums up the pent-up frustration of women who have always been marginalised and victimised by traditional Indian society. The role defined for women does not change from one end of the social ladder to the other. Deshpande's fiction opens up hitherto unknown perspectives on the Indian woman who even today is seen as "an appendage to man or family" (Sandhu 15). She seeks to explore the myth of man's superiority and the myth of woman being always dependent and thus ushers in the winds of change at least in sensitive readers.

The novelist has skillfully portrayed her characters, though her pictures of women are more lively. Even Kishore, Haris, Amrut and Bhaskar are adequately individualised and live through their characteristic behaviour; action and words. Aju, grandfather, father, Akka and Inni represent the old generation, more loving, kind, patient, self-abnegating and of wider sympathies. Baiajji is presented as a veritable phenomenon of old womanhood. Vanaa and Urmila are perfect complements to each other. Urmila, the sailor's wife and college teacher, is more self-reliant and has an identity different from
that of her husband. She is self-respecting and does not want to live on Kishore’s money. She is, however, a sensitive wine and needs Kishore as an oak to entwine herself around. While Urmila is the modem woman, Vanaa is traditional in so far as she is more dependent on Harish and is always guided by his considerations in everyday matters of life. Kalpana is a modern girl given to fashion and becomes a victim of lust. Shakutai is an unforgettable pathetic female, but Priti is the egregious female, self-engrossed and conceited. She is painted satirically, but still she is not an object of derision. Shanthi Sivaraman in “Women in The Binding Vine” classifies two types of women in Vine. One is Vanaa, educated, cheerful and optimistic. She is a social worker. She is submissive and willing to go along with her man. She is solicitous and caring. The other one is Urmila, who is different. She walks out of her marriage (136). Urmila thinks that “it is women who take parenthood seriously, men don’t, not to the same extent anyway” (BV 76). This is true of at least Urmila’s, Shakutai’s and Sulu’s husbands. Urmila’s was a love marriage. There was a time when her life was full of ecstasy and she was fearless and confident as her love gave her immense strength. But now, she realises that she has married a man ”who flirts into her life a few months in a year and flirts out again leaving nothing of himself” (BV 164). Instead of being confident, she is now under a constant fear of losing him. Shakutai’s husband, although a father of three children, has actually abandoned her and is living with another woman. Had he lived with Shakutai, her sister Sulu’s husband would have never dared to touch Shakutai’s daughter, Kalpana, or cherished the dream of marrying her. Being protectionless, Kalpana is raped by him and fatally injured. Sulu, his wife, commits suicide. Woman pines for love and understanding
in married life. Instead, she is made to suffer from fear. Talking about Sulu, Shakutai says:

After marriage she changed. She was frightened, always frightened. What if he doesn't like this, what if he wants that, what if he is angry with me, what if he throws me out...? Nobody should live like that Urmila so full of fears (BV 196).

Deshpande implies that a marriage based on fear can never be happy. However, in marriage, the girl's feeling or choice is not taken into consideration. So, Deshpande in Vine extends her vision of asserting / registering a woman’s voice of protest to shatter the bondages of patriarchal conventions.

Time has several man-woman relationships – Sam and Madhu, Joe-Leela, Savitribai-Ghulam Saab and Lata and Hari. Madhu takes Lata and Hari as lovers: “I’ve realized I’m sharing the house, not with a married couple, but with a pair of lovers. The air between them, when they’re together, seems to crackle with excitement, their feelings hover, thick and palpable, about them... I can hear their love in the way they speak, in their laughter... in the silence...” (MT 39-40). Joe and Leela are supportive of each other. They respect the ‘others’ and realize the need for personal space. Savithribai has used Ghulam for her own ends. She used him and discarded him “strangely enough just as it is Gopal’s failure in the role of a husband that pushes Sumi towards a need to recognize herself, it is Savitribhai’s rejection of a wifely role that leads her towards professional success” (Jain Gendered Realities 118). Madhu’s case is of a normal young woman who loves life and marries Som. And Som, her husband, allows his
imagination to run away with him as he thinks of the relationship she may have had. He is pressed “by a madness that seems to have no end” (MT 257). It is a madness that leads to his total withdrawal from her and gives rise to tension and unhappiness in their married life. He wants her to talk about her first sexual congress “Their whole married relationship seems to be hinged on this sense of total possession with which the male is obsessed, an obsession which has its roots in cultural tradition, and has led to the heightened value attached to purity and chastity” (Jain, *Gendered Realities* 119). It focuses on the body as the basis of marriage.

Sex outside marriage or before marriage is associated with a moment of crisis at least in two novels. In *Shadows*, Indu and Naren have a relationship willingly or with full knowledge of each other’s position. Indu does not feel guilty about it. To her, the sexual affair is an act of communication. In *Remedies*, it happens when Madhu believes her mother to be dead and her father’s young friend tries to comfort and assure her. It is at this particular time that the love and warmth of a young man makes her to go bed with him. It releases the tension and makes her get out of despair. In both cases, lust is absent. The bodily act does not foreground the body and is in direct contrast to Som’s savage love making and Manu’s sadistic perversions.

Other parent–child relationships, which have had a lasting impact, are Leela’s relationship with her mother in *Remedies* and Urmì’s with her mother, Inni in *Vine*, Leela, like Mira in *Vine*, is given away in marriage much against her own wishes outside. Urmì has always felt distant from her mother Inni, and skipping a generation she has attached herself to her grandmother. Inni is the submissive wife who has failed to take a
stand against the punishment which took away her daughter from her. Inni is seen as another who lacks the maternal instinct and still wants to look young and go out and have a life outside the confines of domesticity.

In Time, Sumi is not neurotic, nor obsessed by a need to step out of femininity. There is none of Saru’s anger in her. She shows an enormous amount of patience. She is not a professional like Saru. Her marriage to Gopal is based on youthful love. Later, her husband, Gopal, leaves their home, in a way walks out of his house. Gopal is not going with another woman. He has been through a crisis in his profession and has resigned from his teaching post. Like a responsible and loving mother, she helps and guides her children so as to make them great in this world. In this regard Prasanna Sree in Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande says:

Though deserted by her husband for no fault of hers, Sumi learns to pick up the threads of her life. Like Doris Lessing's characters Mary Tusner, Molly, Ella, Marion and Anna of "The Golden Note Book" and Martha and Maise of "A Ripple from the Storm," who opt to be independent and want to seek their identity and individuality in their own way, Sumi too wants to fight her own battle and assert her individuality. Unlike Saroj in Storm in Chandigarh, Simrit in The Day in Shadow, Rashmi in This Time of Morning, Martha in A Ripple from the Storm, Molly and Anna in The Golden Notebook, Indu in Roots and Shadows and Saru in The Dark Holds No Terrors, who all leave their husbands Sumi does not do so, but her husband, Gopal leaves her. Though deserted,
Sumi does not contemplate a divorce as she considers to be of no use to her. Divorce frees a women legally but the memories attached to the marriage cannot be erased easily. The social stigma associated with divorce in the Indian society haunts her and she has to continue to struggle and suffer at various levels economical, emotional and psychological. A woman may get relief from the painful life of a wrong marriage through divorce, but it will not always re-establish her socially. (109)

Thus, Deshpande in Shadows, Vine, and Time highlights the role of women and their problems in marriage and how women fall prey to the expectations of men or by the role assigned by the male counterparts. Deshpande’s women are common women – a representative section of an Indian society – with full of yearnings and longings to be satisfied. At one level, they think that they can be of their own but in the end they realize that they have to exist for their beloveds and decide to go back to them. They never take it that it is not defeat, but, on the other hand, they take it as their commitment. They voluntarily come forward to domesticate themselves. It is not an act of freeing. It is an act of bonding. It is an act of fixing their selves in the wider context of domesticity. It is their natal home that makes them compromise with their lot. It is their assertion as they are against desertion. They recognize their responsibilities. They ultimately realize whether east or west, house is best. This spell casts a magic world in which they could easily adjust themselves and be as they are and not as they were.
Reference


