

**A STUDY OF THE FEMALE PROTAGONISTS IN THE SELECT  
NOVELS OF JAI NIMBKAR, ANITA DESAI, SHASHI DESHPANDE  
AND MANJU KAPUR**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
TILAK MAHARASHTRA VIDYAPEETH, PUNE**

**FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph. D.)**

**IN ENGLISH  
UNDER THE FACULTY OF ARTS & FINE ARTS**

**BY**

**JARE MAHADEO RAGHUNATH**

**UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF**

**DR. LOKHANDE RAJENDRA PRALHAD**

**DEPARTMENT  
BOARD OF ARTS AND FINE ARTS STUDIES**

**MAY-2017**

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled “**A STUDY OF THE FEMALE PROTAGONISTS IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF JAI NIMBKAR, ANITA DESAI, SHASHI DESHPANDE AND MANJU KAPUR**” completed and written by me has not previously been formed as the basis for the award of any Degree or other similar title upon me of this or any other Vidyapeeth or examining body.

**(Jare Mahadeo Raghunath)**

**Research Student**

**Place: Pune**

**Date:**

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “*A Study of the Female Protagonists in the Select Novels of Jai Nimbkar, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur*” which is being submitted herewith for the award of the Degree of *Vidyavachaspati* (Ph.D.) in English of Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune is the result of original research work completed by **Jare Mahadeo Raghunath** under my supervision and guidance. To the best of my knowledge and belief the work incorporated in this thesis has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree or similar title of this or any other University or examining body upon him.

**PRIN. DR. LOKHANDE RAJENDRA PRABHAKAR**  
(Research Guide)

**Place: Pune**

**Date:**

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**Jare Mahadeo Raghunath**

(Research Student)

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Introduction:**

The depiction of woman in Indian English novel, as the silent sufferer and supporter of the customs as well as conventional standards of family and civilization, has undergone a fabulous change and is no longer presented as a submissive character. The women novelists, Markandaya Kamala, Sehagal Nayantara, Nimbkar Jai, Desai Anita, Deshpande Shashi, Kapur Manju and Roy Arundhati and others have individuals revolting against the traditional roles, flouting the quietness of suffering, trying to move out of the confined survival and proclaiming the individual identity. The woman in their works is trying to be herself, however, does not want to break the family ties.

At present, the woman is no longer presented as the Seeta, Savitri, Draupadi or Damayanti. She has changed her age old customary role as a compromising as well as devoting one. The ideal image of woman is being gradually replaced by the realistic one. She is now aggravated and estranged one. Today, there is no place, where woman is not there, shoulder to shoulder with man. Modern woman is now not in the secondary position but in similar rank. As an answer to this, the man who is anxious about his position has been resorted to entrust slaughter against women with the intention to crush and subjugate them. Now-a-days, in newspapers and other media we daily come across incidents of wife- burning for dowry, female infanticide and rape. Therefore, women need to be protected by the society. There is also need to give justice to the woman in general and victims of atrocities in particular. In Indian culture and society once women were worshipped as Goddesses. But unfortunately the present society is getting detached from the roots and everybody here is becoming degraded only due to male ego.

As a result, it has raised many questions. The first question is why and how woman is becoming susceptible to the aggressive intuition? Why the guardian mother (Janani) is failing to guard herself from her own world? Undoubtedly, the Government of India is cheering the equivalent position of women by forming and

enacting laws. The government in 2001 has passed the policy as 'The National policy for the Empowerment of Women'. They have also passed the Bill for 33% Reservation for Women, in 2010. These are really the significant steps taken by the Indian Government. In spite of this still there are some dark corners and women irrespective of any class, creed or religion are not able to enjoy their rights. Therefore, women have to change themselves. Woman should be strong enough to establish her individuality. Furthermore, they have to be bold enough to stand firm and resist every crime. They need to organize themselves into groups and hold up all sufferers of violence.

By tradition, the writing of Indian Women Writers has been given less importance due to patriarchal suppositions. The male experience has been supposed to be superior to female experience. It is perhaps because of the fact that most of these women writers have failed to observe their familial roles. No doubt that the visions of Indian women's ambitions and views are not outside the structure of Indian societal and ethical commitments. However, Indian Women Writers writing in English are quarries of a second preconception in relation to their local counterpart's. The writers from intelligent, affluent and educated classes have mastery over English. As a result their works often belong to high class social strata. Their writing is cut off from the truth of Indian life.

Anyhow, Indian writing in English is becoming popular very fast. In the territory of fiction, it has harbingered a new epoch. It has also earned many successes both at home and overseas. Indian women writers who are writing in English have begun to question the well-known and age-old patriarchal supremacy. They are not anymore puppets in the hands of men. They have revealed their merit in the field of literature. They have done it in terms of both quality and quantity and are showing it even today without any difficulty. At present, the works of Markandaya Kamla, Nimbkar Jai, Sahgal Nayantara, Desai Anita, Hariharan Geetha, Mehta Rama, Jabhwala Ruth Prawar, Deshpande Shashi, Desai Kiran and Manju Kapur and many others have left permanent mark on the readers of Indian fiction in English.

A major development in contemporary Indian fiction is the augmentation of a feminist or women centered approach. It seeks to venture and understand experience,

from the point of a feminine perception and responsiveness. According to Patricia Meyer Specks:

*“There seems to be something that we call a women's point of view on outlook.....”*<sup>1</sup>

Today, Indian English fiction has become one of the important forms of Indian English literature. It symbolizes different phase's growth of our innumerable enlightening and general life precise from the commencement of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the mid-nineties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The publication of the first Indian novel in English, *Rajmohan's Wife* by Bankim Chandra Chaterjee in the year 1864, marks the real beginning of the Indian Writing in English. It shows that Indian Writing in English is about one hundred and forty six years old. Indian Writing in English was labeled with various labels as Indo-Anglian Literature, Indian-English Literature and Indo-English Literature. Therefore the researcher feels that it will be precise here to take a brief review of the development and course of Indian Writing in English and its genres.

English was introduced as one of the subjects in schools and colleges much before the Indian independence in 1947. The result of this was ripe for the flowering of the original Indian prodigy in the new fields. A lot of Indian writers started writing in English even before India got freedom. They took it as their career to present the natural expressions of the people under the rule of British government. The initial works of fiction in English penned by Indian writers are *One Thousand and One Nights* by Ghosh S. K., *Indian Detective Stories* by Benerjee S. B. and *The Slave Girl of Agra* by Dutt R. C. Along with them well-known Indian philosophers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Sree Aurbindo, Lokmanya Tilak, Gokhale, etc. used this very language to converse Indian feelings and thoughts to the foreign people and specifically western people.

The fact is that English education could promote and edify the divine cause of independence. India could liberate itself on August 15, 1947 from the British reign because of Gandhiji's exceptional leading role and determination. The great political leaders also penned comprehensively in English with their articulate style. English language, being valued and well-regarded by all these writers and speakers of India, could remain in India even after British left India. It was not treasured and esteemed

only by writers and speakers but also by ordinary people of India. The opening of more and more schools, colleges, institutes and establishment of more universities in India contributed towards steady progress in literateness of Indian people in English language. English language, India being the multi-lingual and multi-cultural country, became a crucial instrument for interaction between the speakers belonging to different language backgrounds. It also became the important source for all round growth in India.

India got independence in 1947 and there was change in every field and aspect of life of Indian people. There was change in every field and literary field was not exception to it. Indian writers writing in English and their writing attained a new array and influence. The Indian English novelists of the immediate post-independence era inherited the multiethnic character and infused a new susceptibility in their works. Their works replicated the optimism and ambitions of a liberated nation which had agonized long under heartless alien reign. There is also a message of unhappiness and downheartedness, of frustration and estrangement which resulted when the people saw their expectations and ambitions in free India are rejected and overlooked. Indian English novelists of that time have accomplished the challenging task of presenting an actual picture of Indian society with all its vice and evils with a view to improving and energizing it. They have done it in an excellent way.

Indian English novel, immediate after independence, is engrossed with the inner life and individual difficulties of male and female passing through radical vicissitudes. It is in the limelight for realism. The novelists with wide-awake eyes and considerate hearts have inquired deeper and deeper into the wide-ranging and multitudinous social life of India. Both the urban and rural areas have been fully explored by these writers. The image of our country as represented by Anglo-Indian novelists – Meadows Taylor, Rudyard Kipling, John Masters, and E. M. Foster – was far from truthful. In fact they had missed the depth of India, the profounder currents of Indian politics and the ardent longing of her people. On the other hand, the Indian English novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Nahal Chaman, Malgaonkar Manohar, Khushwant Singh, Markandaya Kamala, Sahgal Nayantara, Jhabvala Ruth P. and Desai Anita have dealt with a number of aspects of Indian societal existence truthfully. They have exposed the



horrid evils with a view to improving the existing order. Among them, the great trinity i.e. Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan have elevated the Indian fiction to better standards. Therefore, the researcher feels that it will be of great help to take brief review of these male novelists' insights about female protagonists in their novels.

Mulk Raj Anand is the herald of social pragmatism and change in Indian English fiction. He stands unrivalled as a humanist in Indian English novel. He has depicted the pretenses and insincerity underlying the elegant covering of social life. He has primarily dealt with the miseries and woes of the deprived, exploited people in the society and their fight for enhanced and improved life. He has portrayed a world with an outstanding variability of unreal characters. He has chosen his women characters from urban as well as rural backgrounds. His female characters range from the noblewoman to the beggarly maid and the attractive woman from hamlet to the society lady. These female characters either have enthused his philanthropic sympathy deeply or have aroused his respect. He has depicted the real place of women in the Indian Hindu culture. While writing about the portrayal of female characters in Anand's fiction, the great scholar M. K. Naik writes that the recurrent subject of his novels is "*The position of woman in traditional Hindu society*".<sup>2</sup>

Anand exposes misconceptions, conventions, customs, religious beliefs and manipulation of women in Indian society. He feels that all these have devitalized Indian culture completely. He, as a defender of betterment of women, brutally exposes the manipulation of women in Gauri in his novel, *The Old Woman and the Cow*. Gauri is intimidated, distrusted, beaten and subjugated by her husband Panchi. Therefore, she forsakes her home and husband to live on her own and to lead her own life in her own way. Perhaps for this reason, Gauri is his best creation among his female characters. In this novel, the novelist also questions the sovereignty of man over women. In his novel, *Lajwanti* he portrays a woman character with profound sympathy, perhaps the most unforgettable woman character. The young wife in this novel undergoes the mental anguish when she realizes that for her husband her status in the house is just of a sex hunger satiating machine. Thus, Mulk Raj Anand is a novelist with a vision. He believes that the function of literature is to expose social

evils. He also believes that literature is for solving problems and creating egalitarian social order.

R. K. Narayan, one of the most illustrious novelists of India and the second from the great trinity, is an artist of exceptional talent. He prudently avoids publicity, promise and purpose to which Anand is keen. He is the creator of the sequence of Malgudi novels. He is essentially comical. He writes about the South Indian lower middle class people. He, in his novels, depicts many women characters representing various facets of mentality and personality. Let us count these facets one by one. Chandran's mother in *The Bachelor of Arts* is a loving and considerate but conservative and orthodox woman. She is a true image of conventional Indian society. Savitri in *The Dark Room* and Sushila in *The English Teacher* are timid, silent, suffering and sacrificing Indian wives. Shanta Bai from *The Dark Room* is the butterfly type of woman in the town. Other women characters from *The Dark Room* are Pouni who is sour tonged wife of Mari. Gangu is portrayed as the talkative, forward wife of a teacher. The two female characters Meenakshi and Brinda from *The Financial Expert* represent the type of Indian housewife. Bharti in *Waiting for the Mahatma* is presented as possessing the savior strength that is woman's Shakti. She makes a patriot and a man of Sriram. In *The Guide* Raju's mother represents the conventional social morality and is averse to change and innovation whereas Rosie is modern and breaks away from a normal way of living. Daisy in *The Painter of Signs* dominates over her male partner and manifests the spirit of liberation. She is the new woman who does her best to establish woman's equality with man. Rangi in *The Man-eater of Malgudi* epitomizes an unpolished type. She is a professional prostitute. She is not ashamed of her profession and never tries to hide it.

Hence, we can say that some of Narayan's female characters are archetypal Indian housewives. They are humble, diffident, mild, affectionate and submissive. They are spiritual and customary in their ways. In reality, they are the champions of the ancient Indian way of life. They are anxious about the welfare of their male counterparts and their next generation. They run their families frugally and competently. They seek wisdom as they grow old. They try to become independent and self-assertive in the course of time. Narayan has also depicted some of his woman characters as modern and unconventional in their opinions and ways of life. They are

presented as beautiful and flirt. They break away from a normal way of living. They do not give importance to conventional standards of virtue and purity.

Raja Rao, the third from the great trinity, is a devoted writer and has a high sense of the poise of his natural ability as a writer. His novels reveal the social and political conditions of his times. He has reinforced the Gandhian Philosophy and has also projected the Indian convention and ethos in his writing. His writing has the essence of Indian custom and Hindu values and principles. He has cemented the road for women novelists in India.

Raja Rao has a profound comprehension of the female susceptibility and is animated to the loveliness of womenfolk. He reveals a close knowledge of minor and major difficulties of females and their sensitivity towards their existence. He has given expression to all that in his portrayal of women. He portrays the customary women in his works. It, in fact, demonstrates the novelist's concept of the woman. Raja Rao appears to be in the Hindu spiritual notion that the feminine principle supplements and completes the male. He has strong belief that man is not perfect without woman and if there is no woman then the universe has no meaning. It is meaningless. Therefore, he anticipated and described the need, desire, and struggle of women for establishing their identity and freedom. He has arrested the very essence of the Indian thought and custom and the responsiveness of the society towards the actual demand and life of woman. He understands the feelings, emotions and pangs of woman. He depicts the consciousness and mindset of woman.

Raja Rao's female characters are the representatives of various incarnations of Shakti. They possess the unconquerable spirit of Shakti. His female characters participate in demonstrations and are ready to face police violence. They also embody the holy aspects of Shakti. They are first stimulated to join the freedom movement. In his novel, *Kanthapura*, women characters are depicted as fighting for India's independence from the clutches of the British rule. In his *The Serpent and the Rope*, there are four female characters that represent four diverse features of Shakti. Little Mother stands for the unselfish and sympathetic features of Shakti. Lakshmi stands for the negative facet of Shakti. The third female character Savithri stands for the female sensibility in its comprehensive form. The fourth female character is the young

queen of England. She is supposed to give fresh life and strength to England after her coming to throne.

After analyzing women characters depicted by these three major writers, one can say that Narayan's female characters are neither in possession of the strength or the forms of Shakti as Raja Rao's female characters, nor they are like subjugated women characters of Mulk Raj Anand. His female characters represent the South Indian women typically. On the basis of analysis, it is obvious that these novelists have portrayed women in their conventional roles as ideal daughter, ideal wife, ideal mother etc. They have portrayed women as mistress too. They have portrayed their female characters more as figures and less as living people.

Besides these novelists, the novelists like: Bhattacharya Bhabani, Malgonkar Manohar, Kabir Humayun, Ghose Sudhin, Chitale Venu, Lall Anand, Bond Ruskin, Joshi Arun, Mehta Ved etc. have enriched Indian fiction in English. Doubtlessly, they followed their seniors and have portrayed an idealized notion of womankind. They have drawn the images of women on the basis of societal conditions of females of their time. The images depicted by them are either perfect forms close to cherubs or beasts. Maximum of these female characters have never exemplified the tangible female of the times. The male novelists are directed by the overall belief that female being is naturally feeble, sensitive and reliant and has restricted capability to work. The female characters depicted by these writers are lacking in depth. They are either embodiments of good qualities or prettiness or sensuousness. Therefore, they don't possess numerous qualities or capacities like living or real women. They have portrayed their female characters as per the demands of male-dominated culture and not as per the demands of women from life.

This typical image of a woman in the novels of male writers has been denied by the women novelists of the country. In their writings, women novelists have instigated a change in the mentality of the people of India. A fascinating feature of their writing has been the resourceful proclamation of the womanly susceptibility. The most significant facet is that these Indian women novelists have succeeded in establishing a strong convention in Indian Writing in English like Western women novelists.

Well-known writers like, Kamala Markandaya, Jai Nimbkar, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Shobha De, Kamala Das, Anita Nair, Bharti Mukherjee, Githa Hariharan and Manju Kapur have given entirely a novel way to Indian English Literature. They have given more importance to female assertion. Their female protagonists' propose ground-breaking changes. They strive to establish their individuality and in their marathon struggle they are ready to face all the vicissitudes of family life. Yet, they remain shoulder to shoulder in spite of all hindrances in their way to establish their identities. Education has played and has been playing the very important role in it. It has enabled the women to understand their position and authority. It eventually has provided them power to confront society and culture which for ages made them to be the victims of suffering. Various Indian writers writing in English have depicted their female protagonists in different ways. Some have depicted them as an ideal image of mythological women. Some writers have presented them as modern women but within the limits of Indian tradition and culture. There are others who have depicted their protagonists as ultra-modern and westernized women. Perhaps we can identify them in three different categories. First are the legendary role models, secondly the new generation writers who portrayed women's fight as resulting act of their mythological image. And the third category is of those writers whose female protagonists are never the silent sufferers, not passive, sacrificing and submissive in nature. They boldly break all traditional barriers and become the rebellious women. They bravely oppose the stereotyped society.

There is more emphasis on education during the post-colonial India. No doubt, because of it there is awakening among the women's world. It has enabled them to find a good position and good progress. However, this perhaps is the reality about the women belonging to well to do families and who are highly educated. There are still some dark areas of the country where education has not been reached. Therefore, the position of women in those areas is same as it was before independence. Still women are subjugated, humiliated and harassed in homes or in their working places. There is an overabundance of women issues such as female infanticides, feticides, dowry victims, gender discrimination, wife beating and several kinds of violence, crime against women. All these issues are now mounting towards an acute end. Women in the modern India can't exist outside the boundaries of married life and motherhood.

Otherwise she is perceived as useless and unworthy after use. So, more Indian novelists have turned their spirit of writing towards the women's world with a great meditative force and genuineness. Some writers depict their female protagonists as no more deity or as mechanization. Their protagonists live like human being and can move from burden of marriage towards the liberty of their own. They can also move from aridness to self-assertion, from weakness or weaker sex towards the strength like deity. Some writers depict their female protagonists as anti-patriarchal characters. Their protagonists can reject to the male protection and male authority. They can live without the support of any male in their life. On the other hand, they can give protection to others whenever is needed. They have proved that women can generate the energy that reins the vigor of the society.

### **1.2 Pre-Independence Period:**

The researcher feels that for convenience it is better to study the history of Indian English literature in two phases: the first phase as Pre-independence Period and the second as Post-independence Period. The pre-independence writing presents woman as romantic, charming cultured, wise, graceful, courageous etc. The novelist of this period considered lives of women, their capabilities and values as peripheral, secondary or insignificant. They believed that the literature produced by women as substandard to the literature produced by men. They took woman as a deity. For them woman was a symbol of the *Pativrata*. In the pre-independence novel, woman had no self-identity. She was depicted in that way. In those days woman was expected to be obedient, submissive and was also expected to comply with the elders and observe the conventions set by patriarchy. In this connection, Shirwadkar Meena, one of the famous research scholars has correctly commented that in the writing of pre-independence period, there is a sense of obedience to the elders and that is abundant. According to her it "*pervades the Indo-Anglican novel.*"<sup>3</sup>

In those days, society was governed by double standards. There were different rules for man and woman. Literature, being the mirror of the society reflected the same in it. In those days, the adultery of a husband was acceptable whereas woman's adultery was not accepted. Therefore, the woman in Indian English fiction of that time had to suffer due to the unfaithfulness of her husband or the shame of sterility. The novelists of that time presented girls and women as inferior creatures. Meena

Shirwadkar accurately pronounces that girls in Anand and Narayan's initial novels have been presented "as subordinate creatures" and "as pictures of pity and suffering".<sup>4</sup>

Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan have represented woman in their novels as *Pativrata* in a customary approach. They have treated her as lacking determination as well as an entity of disgrace. It was believed that to suffer and submit to the conditions in which she is placed is the purpose of woman's whole life. Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* is about a couple Laxmi and her husband, Hari. Though Laxmi has to live in subhuman environment with her husband, she adheres to him. She does not grumble or is not distressed. R. K. Narayan in his famous novel *The Guide* relates real story of the Raju's mother as an acquitted mother representing the conventional social order. Raju's mother follows her husband without any complaint but in the same novel Rosie, the female protagonist is different than Raju's mother. Hence, in the novels of male writers, there is vast variety as well as boring analogous. In their novels, the perfection of womankind was in the motherhood.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the rise of the Indian Writing in English is very important aspect of the Indian renaissance. In India, the work of fiction originates in Bengal which happens to be the first province to launch social reforms and to attain political awakening in the nineteenth century. Introduction of English education by Lord Macaulay in 1835 and the influence of the Western culture have helped in bringing out a rapid change in the traditional thinking of Indians. It is one of the major factors which paved the way for prose fiction. The first Indian novel in English, *Raj Mohan's Wife* (1884), was written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. But Lal Behari Day's *Govind Samantha* (1874) is considered the first important Indian novel in English. Thereafter, many men have begun to write novels in English. These men have faced difficulty in portraying Indian woman with firsthand knowledge. So they have tried to present the stereotypes like protective mother, the Sita-Savitri, Pativrata, the Kali or Shakti.

Educational opportunities, employment avenues, progressive attitude, economic independence, influence of Western feminist movements have impelled women to voice their feelings and experiences. It has become stress-free for women than men to pen about themselves to awaken the other repressed females. Meena

Shirwadkar has appropriately commented that the education aroused the feeling to proclaim their identity among women. It stimulated her feeling of mismatch with tradition bound surrounding, her anger of male controlled ideas of morality and behavior, her problems at home and at her work place. Shirwadkar writes that:

*“As women received education they began to feel an increasing urge to voice their feelings.”<sup>5</sup>*

Initially, the women’s writing is characterized by women’s urge to express themselves. But medium seems to be the problem to fulfill the strong desire for self-expression. The major problems at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were a lack of education, and the purdahs system which came down from the Muslims and was adopted by the Rajputs, the Marwaris, the Maratha aristocrats and the princely families. It made impossible to have any life out of the house for women. The girls were married early and in many cases they became widows early too. The life of women was filled with nothing but chore. Widows were prohibited from remarrying and also looked upon as inauspicious persons. They were also strictly prohibited from attending sacred and religious ceremonies like marriage, house-warming and so on.

With the spread of education, women began to realize the intensity of injustices inflicted upon them by patriarchy or male dominated family society. Reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Gandhi D. K. Alias Annasaheb Karve appeared on the social and political scene of the country. When the Independence Movement started, men and women started coming together to fight the British and gradually began to forget the discrimination based solely on sex. Annasaheb Karve started an educational institute for women in Pune and he himself married a widow. Men like Jyotiba Phule, a great social reformer, taught first their wives so that they in turn could educate the other illiterate women. There were some other social reformers who held that the British might be the political enemies of the Indians, but in other spheres of life such as law, education and social reform they were far ahead of us and in these respects it was necessary to imitate them. As a result, lack of experience in writing we find initial writing dominated by romanticism, sentimentalism and didacticism. Let us study the pre-independence novelists and their novels.



The first Indian woman novelist in English, Toru Dutt (1856-1877) wrote both in French and English before she died at the age of twenty one in 1877. She lived a life isolated from the fluxes of the external world. Her both novels *Binaca, or The Young Spanish Maiden* and *Le Mademoiselle d'Arvers* were autobiographical in nature. She deals with the models of Indian womankind like Sita and Savitri. *Binaca, or The Young Spanish Maiden* was published posthumously in 1878. It depicts Binaca's journey from innocent girlhood to romantic love.

Another was Raj Laxmi Debi. She in her novel *The Hindu Wife or The Enchanted Fruit* (1876) has shown a sign of rebellion against the customary social conditions. The female writers, Sita and Shanta Devi, together, have produced three social novels; *The Garden Creeper* (1931), *The Knight Errant* and *The Cage of Gold* (1923). Though these are mere translations of their Bengali originals yet they take the Indian English novel to a still advancing stage. It is because of this, these two novelists are considered important. One of the scholars, K. S. Ramamurthy writes about these novelists that “ *they seek to project the image of new-woman* ”.<sup>6</sup>

Swarna Kumari Ghosal (1837-1932) also wrote three novels, *The Fatal Garland* (1915), *An Unfinished Song* (1913) and *An Indian Love Story* (1910). Her first novel *The Fatal Garland* is a historical romance about rivalry between two young girls in love. The second novel *An Unfinished Song* is autobiographical. It has subtle susceptibility. The reader is filled with decent imprint by its structure and method. Her novels mainly reflected the middle class milieu. She was the leading author to display the assets of females' writing and promote females' creation to a point of admiration. It was also important that she was the sister of Rabindranath Tagore.

Another significant writer, Krupabai Sathianathan (1862-1894) published two novels – *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Wife* (1894) and *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* (1895). These novels present the author's own story in different phases. She died at a young age however, within that short span of life, she could achieve name and fame for herself.

Shevanthi Bai Nikumbe is another writer who is important like Toru Dutt and Krupabai. Her novel, *Ratnabai*, supports women's education, an important social

reform for the upliftment of women. Her second novel *A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Life* is also memorable novel.

Cornelia Sorabji (1866-1954), the Oxford-educated lawyer, with a spirit of adventure and missionary zeal, fought for the cause of women, especially widows and women in *purdah*. Her novels *Love and Life behind the Purdahs* (1901), *Sun-Babies*, *Studies in the Child Life of India* (1904), *Behind the Twilights* (1908), *India Calling* (1935) and *India Recalled* (1936) served as instruments of social reform. In her works, she tried to show the life behind the *purdah*. She shows us how early widowhood made woman's life difficult and full of agony. She was subject to severe social taboos. But in spite of this, she managed to endure because she had the virtues of love, patience and compassion.

Iqballunnisa Hussain, in her novel, *Purdah and Polygamy Life in Indian – Muslim Household* (1944), has presented the life of Muslim women in *Purdah* system. She has presented the currents and cross-currents in a typical Muslim family.

Rockey Sukhawat Hossain (1880-1932), in her novel, *Sultan's Dream* (1905) presented topsy-turvy world in which men were kept behind *purdahs*. Man takes the status of a woman and the narrator had a caustic laugh at men.

### **1.3 Post-independence Period:**

Woman is at the centre of Indian English fiction and her projections of variety of images have enriched the canvas of fiction since independence. The pre-independence women writers presented an ideal woman who strongly believed that self-effacement, submission, tolerance, self-sacrifice and stoicism were the virtues of Indian womanhood. These female novelists depicted typecast image of woman as a 'Pativrata' and a long grieved wife. In their novels, female protagonist had no individuality and no voice. They were reliant on their husbands. They suffered but did not ascent to object or rebel against inequalities imposed on them.

This scene changed in 1950's and new woman seem to be engaged in creating her own space with new learning and nationality. She slowly emerged in post-independence fiction. The post-independence period witnessed a burst of fiction writing by women writers of greater quality and depth. These writers were more

realistic in their approach than those of the pre-independence. They were able to project a vision of their own. The education has awakened in her, a woman's self. As a result of this she has started thinking of self-governing and autonomous life. And in order to bring this into reality, she has begun to fight against her own reticent person. The battle is hard but it has set in. The miseries of woman owing to her certain flaws and developments have been very justly emphasized by the Indian female novelists. The woman has become cognizant to unshackle herself from the controls of unfair restrictions and conventions imposed on her by the patriarchal society.

During the time of Post-independence, the women novelists become aware of the notion of 'image of new woman'. Therefore, all the post-independence feminist writers as activists depict women with a more or less missionary enthusiasm. They present their female protagonists as fighting against the unfairness and the domination perpetrated by male bigotry. In India particularly feminist writers speak about the theme of feminism with economic and political issues as well. They do it with the intention to question the disparity of the sexes and lack of confidence of women in society. Therefore, their writings are constantly seen to be concerned with the problems faced by women in the male dominated society. These problems are typically found in Indian society.

After independence, due to the effect of '*Gandhian Ideology*' as well as the spread of English education accelerated social reform made a change in the set pattern of Indian traditions. Later on, fresh group of novelists, both male and female attempted to depict women characters bold enough to register their protest against the male-controlled standards. They are unconventional women and they not only reserve their individuality but also defend themselves. They can courageously fight for their liberation and authorization but do not cross the boundaries of communal conventions. They favor those customs that augment domestic and community ethics and are against only those customs that subjugate female. Writers like Anita Desai, Jai Nimbkar, Shashi Deshpande, Githa Hariharan, Manju Kapur etc. in their novels have depicted female characters that are not silent and submissive, meek or weak. But they are far different from that rebellious type of women. They revolt but without harming the societal arrangement. However, practically all the post-independence writers writing in English wish to emphasize primarily on female's voice that is to be heard.

They think that female folk should be treated equally. They should have equal freedom, equal power, parity and respect in the society as their counterparts have. These feminist writers intend to redefine femininity, as the power does not need the sub sex. These contemporary women characters have very difficult job to perform and to make their own place in the world. It is true that they have arisen as adventurous spirits in their colossal fight to live a life of esteem and righteousness.

After the World War II, women writers of quality have enriched Indian fiction in English. There are quite a good number of women writers like: Santha Rama Rau, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Pravar Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sehgal, Shashi Deshpande, Attia Hosain, Bharati Mukerjee, Nergis Dalal, Shoha De, Veena Paintal, Manju Kapur etc. who have contributed immensely for Indian fiction in English. They share, along with men, the celebrity of stirring the Indian fiction in English. While writing about the female susceptibility in the works of female novelists of post-independent India Madhusudhan Prasad opines that:

*“The feminine sensibility has assuredly achieved a certain degree of imaginative self-sufficiency”<sup>7</sup>*

These female novelists of post-independence period have seen the appearance of the new woman in the fast and ever-changing societal environment. The new woman is waiting for emancipation from the dictatorship since many centuries. They offer a substantial world in which characters live with mellowness. They have their own separate elegance and venture, a visualization of their own. They reveal supremacy of creative assortment by which their novels incline to attain coherence. The recurring theme of many of the Indian English novels is search for female's distinctiveness and self-awareness. The post-independence Indian scene, with fast socio-political vicissitudes, has enthused a multiplicity of responses in Indian English female novelists. It is noteworthy that familial matters, marital problems, and feministic outbursts appeared only after Independence. The feelings of protest and frustration have found explicit expression in the modern age. The women novelists, however, seem to have favorably responded to the changing situations and psychological realities of Indian life.

Education has brought an incredible alteration in the stance of female writers. It has guaranteed monetary autonomy to them. Pen has become a superior armament for women to share their thoughts, views and ideas. This has horrified man and he has forced more societal and authorized conventions on them. But women are not going to remain quiet, they have been fighting these hindrances to prove that they are equal to male members of the society. Despite the pestering, women have demonstrated themselves by attaining access into the male-controlled world.

The freedom movement happens to bring the Indian women out of their protected and fully secured existence. It has pushed Indian female authors onto the political and social picture and they have begun to develop the dominant crusader fervor. Moreover, the doorways of academic institutions are opened for them. Liberty for the Indian female did not mean liberty from callous British rule and its oppression alone. It is a freedom from centuries of patriarchy and male-controlled social and cultural customs. Though the Indian women did not struggle like American women for universal suffrage, she had to strive to attain recognition of her identity and recognition by society for her survival beyond her sex based roles. Male domination has obligated the Indian female to be completely submissive to her counterpart in both the social and financial domains. She has then sought to change that, and bring some balance to the long existed inequality.

The Indo-Anglican writers during the early phase of replication not only showed substantial mastery over English language and versification but also created the platform for the new stage of Indianization. For that purpose they wrote with a public awareness. They interpreted the psyche and spirit of India to the west. Hence, the novels of the writers of early phase have an all-Indian temperament. Their novels tend to give details about local customs, rites, way of life and ceremonies. They have fabricated them all very dexterously into the framework of their narrative. Therefore, according to Srinivas Iyenger women novelists like Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Pravar Jhabvala are indisputably the most outstanding novelists who have enriched Indian English fiction.

Along with Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Pravar Jhabvala, Jai Nimbkar, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Santa Rama Rau, Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapur are also some other most important women writers whose names can be mentioned in

this connection. These writers express their concern about the existential stress formed throughout the journey of female folk from tradition towards the modernity. This concern is well personified in their most noteworthy novels and short stories. Their fictional works are correlated to the complicated self-location emphasized in the man-woman relationship, woman's genetic apprehension, legendary illusions and women's liberation and woman's emotional response. Myths are still the controlling factors in Indian culture. They have their effect in our lives since a long period. These writers have depicted their fictional characters to present the truth of the current issues related with female folk.

Along with others there are Muslim feminists also. They are Zeenuth Futehally and Attia Hossain who have tried to highlight in their writings about reliable life of Indian Muslim women. Zeenuth Futehally's *Zohra* (1957), named after the protagonist, shows Zohara's journey from innocence to maturity. In the beginning, her life was full of joy but gradually her life begins to dry up owing to social taboos and the fetters of family restrain. It gives the novel a tragic dimension.

Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), also depicts the growth of a young girl from the age of fifteen to the age of fifty in a Muslim family of Lucknow. The protagonist Leila is alienated from her people due to her education. In its four parts, the novel depicts a period of thirty five years. When the novel opens Leila is a young girl and by the end she is a mother and a widow. All these years are full of social and political upheaval in the country. Her husband Ameer, whom she has married against the wishes of her family, joins the Army and is later killed in his attempt to escape from the prison. There is partition of the country and of her two cousins, Saleem chooses to go to Pakistan, while Kemal chooses to remain an Indian citizen. Leila is not directly involved in social or political events she only shows an awareness of the changing times. The novelist shows how her protagonist makes a conscious choice, free from dogmatic thinking.

Tara Ali Baig (1916-1989), in her novel, *The Moon in Rahu*, engages the reader's sympathies and challenges one's moral acumen. It deals with a woman's fight to protect her hard-won independence, however, bereft of options it might be. The protagonist tries to protect her widowhood and not her privacy being violated. A

Hindu woman fighting desperately to keep her lack of a Mangalsutra intact is a major reversal in the stream of women's fiction in India.

Shantha Rama Rau (1923-2009), born in India and settled in U.S.A., is a freelance writer, writing on popular themes and has a number of travel books to her credit. She has written only one novel, *Remember the House* (1956), where she portrays the conflict due to east-west encounter. Her women are mostly depicted as victims of political incidents and they are at times declared as war criminals.

Kamala Markandaya (1924-2004) is the first significant post-independence female writer and is unquestionably the supreme among the second generation women fiction writers. Her popular novels are *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), *Some Inner Fury* (1957), *A Silence of Desire* (1961), *Possession* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Coffer Dams* (1969), *The No Where Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973) and *The Golden Honey Comb* (1977). The conflict between tradition and modernity takes the centre stage in her novels. Her female protagonists, by and large are conservative and traditional in outlook. She brings out the steadfast faith of her protagonists in the traditional way of life. Denying themselves their individuality it is admirable that all the Kamala Markandaya's women, despite their conventionalism preserve their distinctiveness. Though repressed and frustrated, they proclaim their identity and autonomy in silent and inconspicuous ways.

Ruth Pravar Jhabvala (1927-2013) is another popular post-independence novelist. She won Booker Prize for her novel *Heat and Dust*. She is called an inside-outsider and outside-insider because of her polish parentage, German upbringing, education in England and marriage to an Indian. She writes about India in a detached and ironical way. Her novels are *To Whom She Will* (1955), *The Nature of Passion* (1956), *Esmond in India* (1958), *The House Holder* (1960), *Get Ready for Battle* (1962), *A Backward Place* (1965), *A New Dominion* (1973) *Heat and Dust* (1975). She is less concerned with the personality development of her women. What she presents is distortion of modernity not women's liberation. Her protagonists look to be contemporary though not in essence or convention. They captivate new thoughts, sensitivities and demeanors under the influence of the western values. Her protagonists do not challenge customs out of any well-founded belief; they do so in

order to pose contemporary. Thus, their modernism is born not out of belief but out of great attraction for the foreign values.

Nayantara Sahgal (1927- ) is the daughter of Mrs. Vijayalaxmi Pandit. Her female characters are generous and progressive in their viewpoints. They discard the current customs and ethics in search for self-realization. Her novels are *A Time to be Happy* (1958), *This Time of Morning* (1965), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1967), *The Day in Shadow* (1971), *A Situation in New Delhi* (1975), *Rich like Us* (1986), *Plans for Departure* (1987) and *Mistaken Identity* (1988). She portrays women mostly from the upper strata and often a political backdrop is created. The central concern of her novels is the need for individual freedom, to live life free from all inhibitions and taboos. Her protagonists, though rooted in the Indian culture and tradition, strive hard to live as free and full human beings in their own way. Her protagonists rebel against current ethical codes and societal standards that deny them freedom. Her women succeed in overcoming social opinion and orthodoxy. Kusum of *A Time to be Happy* is archetypal middle-class girl. The process of self-identity which begins instinctively in Kusum is recognized by Saroj of *Storm in Chandigarh* and by Simrit of *A Day in Shadow*. It is climaxed in Sonali, the self-assured, ICS topper and woman officer of *Rich like Us*. She supports a relationship founded on reciprocal communication, comradeship and parity. She advocates that woman is not to be considered as a mere sex hunger satiating machine but as man's equivalent and privileged mate.

Raji Narasimhan (1930- ) has in all published five novels. In *The Heart of Standing is you Cannot Fly* (1973) and *For Ever Free* (1979), the protagonists are with unconventional viewpoint. Her first novel talks about the life and quandary of a girl working in a women's hostel. Her second novel, *For Ever Free* depicts the picture of a married woman in the existing society whose desire is to become self-sufficient and independent. Her third novel, *Drifting to a dawn* (1983) is not as good as her second novel, *For Ever Free*. Her fourth novel, *The Sky Changes* (1992), projects the female protagonist in search of self-identity. Her fifth novel, *Atonement* (2000), deals with themes like discrimination on the basis of sex, the muteness of females and communication gap between man and woman.

Anita Desai (1937- ) gave the novel a kind of inwardness which it lacked previously. Her novels, *Cry the Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye Bye*



*Black Bird* (1971), *Where Shall We Go This Summer* (1975), *Fire on the Mountain*(1977), *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *The Village by the Sea* (1983), *In Custody* (1984), *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), *Journey to Ithaka* (1995), *Fasting Feasting* (1999), *The Zigzag Way* (2004) and *The Artist of Disappearance* (2011) present the tragedy of women in the matrimonial life. Her female characters, in general, pursue freedom and self-fulfillment but feel disappointed by societal biases and depraved social ethics. Her women are hyper-sensitive and emotional. Therefore, they have to suffer due to many social, economic, political and traditional restrictions. Anita Desai, through her novels, depicts female protagonists who experience emotional upheaval that arises out of a clash between realism and the illusions. Anita Desai has a tragic vision of the woman's life in marriage. Her novels delve deep into both the conscious and unconscious mind of her characters. Most of her protagonists are hyper-sensitive. Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer* cannot bear to witness the attack of crows on the young one of an eagle. Maya of *Cry, the Peacock* is equally sensitive. Most of her protagonists try to escape from the realities of their situation by reverting to childhood and have suicidal or murderous inclinations.

Anita Desai's novels have added a new dimension to the Indian fiction in English by focusing on the inner world of her characters. In a way she has ushered in the psychological novel in Indian English fiction especially by women writers. Her protagonists have illustrated new emergent woman of the seventies. Her protagonists are no longer self-sacrificing and patient. Instead they are intelligent and rebellious who search for fulfillment and are willing to face the challenges of life.

Mrinal Pandey (b. 1946) penned her first novel *Daughter's Daughter* (1993) and her second novel *My Own Witness* (2000). The first novel focuses on gender discrimination and the second novel reveals how women journalists even today, are expected to deal only with women's issues and not with the serious issues.

The next novelist is Shashi Deshpande who has got most sustained achievement. She wrote in all ten novels. They are *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *If I Die Today* (1982), *Come up and be Dead* (1983), *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *That Long Silence* (1988), *Binding Vine* (1992), *A Matter of Time* (1996), *Small Remedies* (2000), *Moving on* (2004) and *In the Country of Deceit* (2008). Her novels mark the beginning of the quest for herself. In addition to the novels she has

also published six collections of short stories and four children's books. One conspicuous feature of her novels is that the representation of a woman belonging to the middle class of the Indian society is very realistic one.

Shashi Deshpande's female protagonists are educated, self-conscious and sensitive. Their revolt against the rigid social and family set up. The novelist appears to believe that women themselves have contributed to their own victimization without any protest or resistance. She, therefore, recommends that women themselves have to disrupt the fetters that have kept them in a state of imprisonment for several centuries. Her female protagonists though ingrained in custom are contemporary in their stance.

Bharati Mukherjee's (1940- ) female protagonists are sensitive and they lack an unwavering sense of personal and cultural identity. Her novels are *The Tiger's Daughter* (1973), *Wife* (1976), *The Middleman and other Stories* (1988), *Jasmine* (1990), *The Holder of the World* (1993), *Leave it to Me* (1997), *Desirable Daughters* (2002), *The Tree Bride* (2004) and *Miss New India* (2011). She has been migrated first from Calcutta to Canada and then to the US. Thus, her novels represent immigrant writing. Her female protagonists are rebellious and highly individualistic.

Uma Vasudev, in her novels *The Song of Anasuya* (1978) and *Shreya of Sonagarh* (1993) depicts the women characters as liberated women with their own clandestine affairs. She makes a chauvinist approach to the man-woman associations. Another novelist, Veena Paintal, through her novels, depicts the dilemma and quandary of female folk in the male-controlled society. Her novels are *Roshini or Serenity in Storm* (1967), *Link in the Broken Chain* (1967), *An Autumn Leaf* (1976), *Spring Returns* (1976) and *Midnight Women* (1979). She appears to present the conventional view of life. Christine Gomez's novel, *Fire Blossoms*, portrays the real life of women. The novel inspects the position of women in India and the dowry problem.

Shobha De is another creative writer writing in English. Her novels, *Socialite Evenings* (1989), *Starry Nights* (1989), *Sisters* (1992), *Sultry Days* (1994), *Strange Obsession*, *Snapshots*, *Second Thoughts* (1996) and *S's Secret* (2009) represent a true picture of the modern Indian woman in firm world. Her characters suffer degradation in their societal, financial and ethnic life. However, they find themselves

accomplished of struggling, negotiating and understanding their being in the end. They are rather strong in character, take bold decisions to survive in the society. They don't run away from life's responsibilities or don't yield to the problems. They opt the exact way of struggling and surviving.

Another significant Indian woman writer is Githa Hariharan. She has written five novels and two collections of stories. Her novels are *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994), *When Dreams Travel* (1999), *In Times of Siege* (2003), and *Fugitive Histories*. These novels show how a woman's dependence on man causes renunciation of woman's individual personality and distraction of normal life. It can be said that she occupies the masculine space to fill it with female drive. The female protagonists in her novels are born and brought up in the middle-class conventional families. They are self-confident, intellectual and stubborn on rudimentary ideas. However, they do not spoil the peace of families instead they bring it.

In Namita Gokhale (b. 1956) produced her first novel *Paro: Dreams of Passion or Passion of Dreams* in 1984. The female characters in this novel do not respond realistically to their life's tests. They are deprived of intellectual and emotive vivacity. Therefore, they appear as typical figures. She demonstrates that for man sex is a primary need whereas for woman it is a secondary need. Her primary need is her individuality. She undoubtedly establishes that for a middle class female, sensual flirtation is the result of individual involvement with a single man. Her novel *Gods Graves and Grandmother* (1994) is notable for its social realism. The protagonist, a young daughter of a prostitute, dreams of dazzling future. Her third novel *A Himalayan Love Story* (1996) traces the lives of two star crossed lover. Her fourth novel, *The Book of Shadows* (1999) marks her coming of age. As Yashoda Bhatt comments:

*"Indo-Anglian Literature..... spans a rich variety of themes – from the theme of a conventional woman to that of the New Woman....."*<sup>8</sup>

Another novelist who is the recipient of several national and international awards including Booker Prize is Arundhati Roy. She has one novel and a collection of essays to her credit. Her novel *The God of Small Things* focuses on the

protagonist's clandestine desires and worries and her imaginings and wishes. Her heroine challenges the polluted communal order. First, she gets married to a man of her choice and then breaks that marriage and gets herself tangled in an illegitimate love with low-caste man. In the end, she falls prey to the male-controlled culture for her misbehavior.

Thus, one can see that in the recent past, there are a number of women writers who are writing in English. It is also significant that there is an enrichment of themes and techniques of Indian English novel in the hands of these novelists. It is really impressive fact that the most recent novels of the novelists of the early 70s, 80s, and 90s, in Kirpal's words, are noticeably different from their early novels in method, nature, opinion and mode. Woman is now craving for individual happiness and identity of her own. The process of the Indian woman's freedom from years of bondage and subdual has begun. However, astonishingly, she is not able to liberate herself entirely from the controls of certain traditional values and principles.

These novelists in their novels depict their female protagonists as self-assured and aggressive, as women with a novel susceptibility and a fresh whim. The new or the emerging women in the novels of these novelists project the author's conscious rejection of the traditional models attributed to women. The female characters for the first time in modern Indian English fiction were allowed to be more articulate and assertive than their other fictional predecessors.

### **1.3.1 Life and Works of Jai Nimbkar**

One of the significant post-independence Indian women novelists is Jai Nimbkar born in 1932. She wrote three novels and two collections of short stories. She lives in Phaltan, Maharashtra. She has written about a variety of themes and problems concerning the Indian woman particularly in the socio-economic context of the post-independence India. Her major thematic concerns are inequality of the sexes, place of woman in her family and society, her search for personal identity and the meaning of marriage. Her novels are *Temporary Answers*, *A Joint Venture*, *Come Rain*, and collections of stories are *The Lotus Leaves and other Stories* and *The Phantom Bird and other Stories*. Like her mother, late Iravati Karve, Jai Nimbkar was

a very brilliant student of Sociology and also a voracious reader of the English and the American Literature.

A post-colonial woman is her protagonist who strives for 'self-identity' and 'emotional independence'. Her female protagonists try to create their own image without losing feminine sensibility which leads to clashes with other characters. Being a versatile reader of Politics, Economics, Pali, Sanskrit and English, the writer believes that imperfect relationships can form a better theme for fiction. She finds the theme of complicated and imperfect human relationship fascinating.

She is a bilingual writer in English and Marathi. She has to her credit several works like the collection of short stories in English *The Lotus Leaves & Other Stories* (1971) and *The Phantom Bird and Other Stories* (1993); her Marathi collection of pen sketches *Ardhuk* and *Sath* are equally popular and they reflect the human relations and complexities. Her book on the grammar of Marathi shows her intellectual capabilities to deal with language skillfully. *In Memoriam* is one of the stories from *The Lotus leaves and Other Stories* which was telecast as short film by Biroba films Pvt. Ltd. The other story *The Childless One* explores the reality about a childless woman and her relationship with other people.

Her novels *Temporary Answers* and *A Joint Venture* deal with the predicament of the Indian woman as she comes face to face with the institution of marriage. They end a bit tamely after the climax without offering a resolution. The two protagonists are apparently on the two sides of the same problem. *A Joint Venture* was published in the year 1988, fourteen years after the publication of her first novel, *Temporary Answers*. *A Joint Venture* gives us a sense of a lived reality making the novel almost autobiographically authentic not only in terms of details of a lived life but in terms of a psychological reality as well. Her third novel *Come Rain* presents a new version of the east-west encounter, a prominent theme of the Indian English fiction. An Indian boy goes to America as a student and a researcher, marries an American girl and brings her to India. Just as she does, he also finds it difficult to adjust to his parents and home.

### 1.3.2 Life and Works of Anita Desai:

**Anita Desai**, formerly Anita Muzumdar was born on June 24, 1937, at Mussaorie, a quaint little hill-station, north of Delhi, India. Her father D. N. Muzumdar was a Bengali business executive and her mother Toni Nime was a German expatriate. Though born and brought up in India, she was definitely influenced by her mother's foreign culture. Her family lived in Delhi. Therefore, she completed her education – first at Queen Mary's School and then at College at Mirianda House, Delhi University. She completed her Bachelor's degree in 1957 from that college. She did it in English Literature.

She had an unconventional upbringing, which in turn helped her to cultivate writing ambitions in her young mind. During her early years, she spent much time in learning various languages like German, Bengali, Urdu, Hindi and English that augmented her desire for literature. As a child she spoke German at home and Hindi among her friends. At primary school, she learnt to read and write English, which finally became language of her writing. When she was a child of seven years, she began to write prose, mainly fiction and published some small fragments in children's magazines. At the age of nine, she read *Wuthering Heights*. She was so impressed by the novel she had said, "*it struck me with the force of a gale and I still vibrate to it.*"<sup>9</sup> Thus she was nurtured in the world of Brontes in her initial life. At the age of 20 she studied the novels of Lawrence, Woolf, James and Proust, which exercised deep impression on her.

Anita married at a very young age i. e. soon after she graduated from Delhi University in the year 1957. She married Ashvin Desai. He was the director of a computer software firm and also was the writer of the book '*Between Eternities: Ideas on Life and The Cosmos*'. The couple had four children – Rahul, Tani, Arjun and Kiran. Her daughter Kiran followed her and became the winner of Booker Prize. Desai has taught at Mount Holyoke College, Baruch College as well as Smith College. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and of Girton College, Cambridge University.

Anita Desai, through her writing tries to introduce a neo-psychological vein. She successfully projects a sensibility generally not encountered with other Indo-

Anglian writers of fiction. She is indisputably one of the notable Indian - English fiction writers. She holds a distinctive place among the present-day women novelists of India. She has to her credit a large number of creative works and a coherently growing readership throughout the world. Although she regularly wrote short stories since adolescence, Desai officially launched her career as a novelist in 1963. She has fourteen novels and other literary works to her credit.

Her first novel *Cry, the Peacock* (1963) was published with the British publication. It was subsequently followed by *Voices in the City* (1965) and *Bye-bye Blackbird* (1971). In the late 1970s, she published the highly praised novel *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), which won the National Academy of Letters for her. During the 1980s, Desai enhanced her reputation with the novels *Clear Light of Day* (1980) and *In Custody* (1984). Both these novels were short-listed for the Booker Prize. The novelist later adapted *In Custody* as a screenplay, which Ismail Merchant and James Ivory produced as a motion picture in 1993. It won the President of India Gold Medal for Best Picture. In 1982, she published the children's work *The Village by the Sea: An Indian Family Story*, which won the Guardian Award for Children's Fiction. Her other novels are *The Artist of Disappearance* (2011), *The Zigzag Way* (2004), *Fasting Feasting* (1999), *Journey to Ithaca* (1995), *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), *Games at Twilight* (1978), *Cat on a Houseboat* (1976), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), *The Peacock Garden* (1974). Out of fourteen, the researcher has selected her two novels for the study. They are *Cry, the Peacock*, (1963), and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975).

In 1990, she received the *Padma Shri* award. Over the years, Desai has been honoured for her work by many national and internationally prestigious rewards. Winifred Holt by Memorial Prize (1978), Sahitya Academi Award (1978), shortlisted for Booker Prize for her novel *Clear Light of Day*, Guardian Children's Fiction Prize (1983), shortlisted for Booker Prize, Nei Gunn Prize, shortlisted again for Booker Prize for *Fasting, Feasting*, Alberto Moravia Prize 2000, Benson Medal of Royal Society of Literature in 2003 and Padma Bhushan (2014) are some of the well-known awards that she has received.

As an academician, she has great personality of literature in the world. She is member of both the Advisory Board for English in New Delhi and the American

Academy of Arts and Letters, as well as fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. She has also taught writing at several universities, including Girton College at Cambridge University, Smith College and Holyoke College.

Anita Desai, through her novels, emphasizes the quest for meaning, estrangement, misery, concern, tedium, and unsatisfied emotive life of her female protagonists. In the same way interpersonal relationships, the ultimate reality, general futility of life, nothingness and worthlessness also haunt her female protagonists. In their mission for a genuine being they go away from the world of battle and attachment. They are preoccupied by the sagacity of belongingness.

Anita Desai shows her keen interest in the depiction of the psychological life of her characters. She likes to delve deep into her female protagonists mind, “*delving deeper and deeper*”.<sup>10</sup> Her main concern is with the moods, wills, conflicts, choices and inner experience of her female protagonists. While talking about Anita Desai’s delineation of female characters, K. R. S. Iyengar rightly says:

*“In her novels the inner climate, the climate of sensibility that lours, clears a rambles like thunder or suddenly blazes forth like lightning, is more compelling than the outer weather, .....”*<sup>11</sup>

Anita Desai’s female protagonists revolt against male-controlled society and try to discover their own latent or to live on their own terms. Such uprising may cause negative effect on their lives but they are not afraid of that. They take the position of outsiders. They battle and censure those cultural traditional ideologies and try to become free individuals. They prefer self-chosen withdrawal as a weapon for their survival in a male dominated society. Desai’s female protagonists desire autonomy within the community of men and women. They feel that is the only way which will fulfill their want. In fact, Anita Desai’s replica of a liberated woman, Bimala in the novel, *Clear Light of Day*, is an unmarried woman. Her married female protagonists like Maya in *Cry, a Peacock*, Monisha in, *Voices in the City*, Nanda in *Fire on the Mountain* and Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* Become disheartened, aggressive or self-destructive. They either misplace their good sense or kill or destroy others or themselves. The vengeance of these women is not a personal one but the result of the intricate societal background, instantaneous family environments and the



relationships with their counterparts. Anita Desai has depicted many of her female protagonists as single women. She neither ignores the institution of marriage nor supports estrangement from society. As Anita Desai says,

*“I don’t think anybody’s exile from society can solve any problem. I think the problem is how to exist in society and yet maintain one’s individuality rather than suffering from a lack of society and a lack of belonging.”*<sup>12</sup>

Anita Desai's in her first novel, *Cry, The Peacock* depicts Maya, the female protagonist as a spoiled daughter of an affluent man. She gets married to Gautama. Gautama is a rather unaffected and practical man. He is a lawyer. Being practical man, he gives more importance to his court-cases and his clients. He is indifferent to his wife’s emotive needs. He is not able to comprehend his wife, Maya’s subtle and emotive temperament. Maya also makes a mistake of taking her husband as her father’s substitute as she grieves from father fascination. She also suffers from an albino fortune-teller’s prediction. He had predicted that one of the husband and wife is going to die within four years after their marriage. All the time she suffers from the fear of death. Finally, she pushes her husband off the parapet and kills him. Even after that she could not get the peace of mind and therefore, commits suicide.

This forecast becomes bothersome to her cataleptic mind. Anita Desai reveals the changing psychological states, psychic observations, inner motives and existential pursuits of man. She successfully creates her own space and space for her fictional art among her contemporary. She deals with the quandary of man and his societal and ethical dilemmas. She like Kafka reveals the man’s traits related to his existence in society. To unfold man’s concealed motives behind his facial actuality of alert mind, Anita Desai tries to analyze a man in action.

Her another novel under study *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is a story of oppressed mind. Sita, the female protagonist of the story, feels the frustration of the suffocative four walls. As a result she takes refuge from her marital life at the ideal land of Magic Island. The story ends leaving the feeling of an intense pain of a young middle class wife who passionately desires to bid goodbye to the hypocrisy and boredom of her daily existence.

It describes the tension between Sita, a sensitive woman and her rational husband Raman. The novelist depicts the protagonist Sita, a woman with four children, reluctant to deliver the fifth one though with seven months' pregnancy. Sita wants to retain the child in her womb because she is afraid of the violence in the world. She goes to the island of Manori for the dream to retain the babe unborn. The miracle does not take place. Instead of finding peace on the island Sita becomes alienated from her family. Finally, she re-establishes her contacts with Raman and gets over her loneliness.

### 1.3.3 Life and Works of Shashi Deshpande

**Shashi Deshpande** (1938) is one of the prominent post-independence Indian woman fiction writers. She is known for her sincerity and ability in voicing the concerns of the urban educated middle class women. Her novels mirror the range of Indian cultural issues. She is the living vibrant woman writer in Indian English literary sphere. She has nine novels and four collections of short stories to her credit. She has been awarded with important **Sahitya Academy Award** for her novel *That Long Silence* (1989).

Shashi Deshpande is one of the famous Indian female writers writing in English. She was born in a little township of Dharwad in 1938. Her father, late "Adya Rangachar Sriranga" the renowned Kannada writer, was labeled as "the Bernard Shaw of the Kannada theatre". She took her education in Mumbai and Bangalore. She got her M. A. (English) degree from Mysore University. She got married with Dr. Deshpande who was a neuro-pathologist in 1962. She went to England in 1969. Motivated by this trip, she published an account of her experiences as short stories. She published her first collection of short stories in 1978, and her first novel, named "*The Dark Holds No Terror*", published in 1980. She is a winner of the Sahitya Akadami award, for her novel '*That long silence*'. There are four Children's Books, a number of short stories, and nine novels to her credit. Along with these, she has several insightful essays which are now accessible in a volume entitled *Writing from the Margin and Other Essays* in her credit. Her Novels are *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980), *If I Die Today* (1982), *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983), *That Long Silence*, *The Intrusion and Other Stories* (1993), *The Binding Vine*, *A Matter of Time*, *Small Remedies*, *Moving On*, and *In the Country of Deceit* (2008). Her children's books are

*A Summer Adventure, The Hidden Treasure, The Only Witness, and The Narayanpur Incident.*

Her novel, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is the story of Saru, the female protagonist. She feels like a trapped creature, trapped by her own guilty feelings. The novel unfolds story of the faulty Saru. She suffers for her brother Dhruva's death. She feels guilty for abandoning parents and also about her mother's death about which she hears accidentally. All these happenings make her penetrate her entire life. It has its impact on her feelings about herself, her career as a physician, her marriage, her feelings towards her male-counterpart Manu and the kids. Throughout her life she remains trapped by her need to succeed at any cost.

Her third novel, *That Long Silence*, is about the female protagonist, Jaya who, in spite of playing the role of a wife and mother to excellence, discovers herself lonesome and alienated. From the beginning Jaya takes care as not to cause any discontentment for her husband but in the course of time she becomes aware that she has been unfair to herself and her career as a writer. Her dread disheartens her from recognizing her relationship with another man. In this novel Jaya, the female protagonist, tells the tale of man and woman from woman's point of view. It also tells us the tale of wife and husband from the wife's point of view. She expresses silence of the female protagonist, Jaya. It presents the clash between the narrators divided self and the housewife. Jaya embodies urban and middle class female.

#### **1.3.4 Life and Works of Manju Kapur**

The other, well-known novelist under study is Manju Kapur. She is a well-known Indian woman novelist who has remarkably contributed to the evolution of Indian English fiction. She is a world acclaimed writer for dealing with wide range of themes in her novels. The researcher, Naik Bhagawat in his research article writes that Manju Kapur in her novels:

*“has emphasized on the issues in the context of patriarchy; inter-religious marriage; family bond, male-female bond, co-existence of past and present.”*<sup>13</sup>

Some critics equate Manju Kapur with Jane Austen and call her Jane Austin of India. Her novels deal with everything that is associated with the contemporary family

and the male-dominated society. Her novels present the female protagonists who are keen to break free from the shackles of tradition and create their own world. These new women want to establish their own identity. In the late seventies and eighties, a number of women novelists appeared dealing with the issues allied to women. They dealt with women's domestic issues, familial violence, laws for women, the family, wellbeing of women, their schooling, their job and their job places and their working circumstances. However, Manju Kapur is the novelist who has taken her female protagonists' one stride further from others. She successfully handled the scorching issues of contemporary world ranging from gender discrimination, female homosexuality, unfaithfulness, barrenness, and break up etc.

Manju Kapur is born in 1948 in Amritsar in India. She is an Indian novelist writing in English. She completed her graduation from the Miranda House University College for women, New Delhi. She got her M. A. degree in 1972 from Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada. She did her M. Phil. from Delhi University. At present, she teaches English at Delhi University. She is married to Gun Nidhi Dalmia. The couple has three children and three grandchildren. They live in New Delhi.

Her first novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998) brought International acclaim for Kapur. She is awarded the Commonwealth prize for Eurasia Section for this novel. This novel is followed by her four other novels. They are *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2009) and *Custody* (2011). Kapur in her novels deals with the lives of middle class Indian women fighting to break the custom of silence against male-control in Indian patriarchal society. Her female protagonists are predominantly educated. According to a noted scholar Gupta Balram, Manju Kapur's female protagonists' fight and they struggle "*between tradition and modernity*".<sup>14</sup>

*Difficult Daughters* is a story of Virmati. It presents Virmati's fight for vocation and individuality against the overriding principles of domesticity. The novel is set around the unstable years of World War II and the partition of India. Kapur pragmatically depicts women of three generations but her focus is on Virmati who is the difficult daughter of the second generation. Virmati is a woman who is torn between her domestic obligation and her longing for education and illegitimate love. The key theme of the novel is search for control over one's fate. On one side India is

struggling for independence from the British reign and on the other side Virmati is struggling for the autonomy to live life according to her wish. The novelist has portrayed her protagonist as woman trapped between the obsession of the flesh and a longing to be part of political and intellectual movements.

Manju Kapur's second novel *A Married Woman* seems to be revolutionary in intimating a different kind of theme and morality which is not common either in Indian society or in Indian literature. It deals with the life of Astha, her marriage with Hemant, her association with Pip and her involvement in various social activities. A critic writes in *The Observer*:

*"A married woman is a well-balanced depiction of a country's inner development – its strengths and its failure – and the anguish at a woman's unrest."*<sup>15</sup>

In this novel, Manju Kapur sees the world from the woman's perspectives and that is why in spite of several attempts she does not succeed in the marginalization of her female protagonist, Astha. She retains her individuality right from the beginning of the life. She seems to be the representative of middle class educated women who bears the burden of cultural and moral loads all the time in the life. She also symbolizes the struggle of the woman for the survival in the male-dominated society. Her love for economic independence is the real motif of the writer. Her story is a different kind of disappointment. She has everything a married woman looks for yet she is not happy. She is educated. She is an artist. She has a loving and beautiful husband. She has a good house. She has economic stability and freedom. Yet, she is not satisfied. Therefore a critic rightly writes in *The Independent*:

*"The fluent and witty novel gets under the skin of marooned woman giddily and triumphantly set adrift by the promise of love."*<sup>16</sup>

#### **1.4 Feminism in Indian Fiction:**

The word feminism has changed over time. It has been regarded as the 'state of being feminine'. There are many definitions of it. Today, feminism has been defined in different ways. According to the *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, feminism is:

*“the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men”.*<sup>17</sup>

Another word ‘feminine’ which is associated with feminism has been derived from the Latin word, *femina*. ‘Femina’ means ‘woman’ or ‘female’. Its literal meaning is ‘she who suckles’ and it also means ‘having qualities or characteristics like ‘sensitivity’, ‘delicacy’, or ‘prettiness’ that are conventionally attributed to women. ‘Feminine’ is also the word which is used for women that typically signifies the qualities that are stereotypically connected with women. The qualities it signifies are ‘caring’, ‘ladylike’ ‘nurturing’ and ‘not aggressive’. It is because aggressiveness is expected only from men and not from women especially in the male dominated society. In this social structure females are considered as ‘docile’, ‘meek’ and ‘voiceless’ figures. It is a set of attributes, behaviors, and roles generally associated with girls and women. It is socially constructed, but made up of both socially-defined and biologically-created factors.

There are certain Indian women novelists who can be termed as feminist writers. Though most of them don’t like to be called feminist, they are definitely feministic in their approach. However, one should understand that Indian feminism differs from Western feminism in terms of philosophy and culture, existence and living styles, custom and standards. Indian feminism functions within the boundaries of Indian society. It does not try to defeat all arrangements. It has never denied and even now does not deny religious conviction but fights against communalism and downgrading of women. It stresses societal reorganization. It also demands mutual understanding, good relationship between man and woman and coordination among family members. It never supports man and woman separation. The feminist of India are well aware of the fact that Indian women can be happy only with their families and cannot on her own. But what is fundamental and significant for them is that there should be full reverence towards women and parity with their counterparts. According to Sumita Ghose, a member of the URMUL Trust of Rajasthan:

*“The Indian feminist movement has operated within communities, not among individuals. ....Their struggle that are perhaps more pragmatic than ideological.”*<sup>18</sup>

Indian women have been suffering since ages and it has given birth to Indian feminism. The western feminism may have born out of the tendency to focus on one's own interests, thoughts and feelings as well as de-polarization. Indian feminism has some precise concerns to contest against. Conventionally, Indian society gives more importance to the male child. Resultantly, there are a number of atrocities such as female infanticides and abortion. They are growing more and more. In rural areas the negligence of female child is common scene. This negligence results in malnourishment of female child. They are even deprived of education. In western countries the issue of abortion is individual choice. The pregnant woman from western country is free to decide whether to go for abortion or not. However, in India it may not be the choice of the pregnant woman. It is perhaps imposed on them because of patriarchal system or social pressure. Western feminism can be said as individual or permissive feminism. According to Indu Agnihotri:

*“Unlike in the west, Indian feminism has never really been anti-family, although we oppose patriarchy within family structure.”*<sup>19</sup>

So, Indian and western feminism are unlike. Indian feminism is very down to earth in its concepts. Of course, it is a hybrid yet it is rooted; it is western in theory but indigenous in practice. An Indian traditional woman never walks side to her husband, never dines before her husband. She can never feel happy in a separate world of her own where she gets greatest honour but without her husband and family. She feels life-long devotion and truthfulness and sincerity as her main ambition of life. But on the same time we can't ignore the fact that the tradition bound women never can see her individuality be ruined by others.

There are certain differences between Indian feminism and Western feminism. Western feminism follows the notion of self which is in relation to individualism but in Indian Society individual is considered just as a part of the society. According to Suma Chitnis:

*“.....the historical circumstances and values render the women's issue different in India”.*<sup>20</sup>

Women in India have gained equal status with men directly with the introduction of the Constitution whereas in the West women had to fight a long battle

for equal status with their counterparts. Secondly even today the institution of marriage and family is held as necessary in India. Perhaps it is because it provides both men and women the safety and social status. In fact in India both the sexes find it hard and upsetting to break away from the institution of marriage and family. Therefore there is difference in Indian feminists and Western feminists. Indian feminists through their writing register their frustrations against the social injustices, suppression and subjugation of women. They don't ask for their freedom from the institution of marriage and family.

Since the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Indian feminism has gone hand in hand with activism relevant to Indian society. Feminists have sought the liberation of woman by advocating a ban on certain social customs such as polygamy, child-marriage, *sati* and *purdah* and by demanding educational and legal rights for the woman. Contemporary feminists are working for the eradication of social evils such as dowry deaths, female feticide and infanticide, rape, wife beating and desertion. At the same time, they are also fighting for education, equal wages and economic independence of the woman. The issues may have altered since the 1930's, but the nature of the battle against her oppression remains the same.

The theme, the focus and the design in the literature of the twentieth century has undergone a change. Therefore the imaginative and resourceful responses of the contemporary writers are related to the changing world view and the questioning attitude thereby developed by it. The researcher will concentrate only on the novels of four novelists under study. The novelists are Jai Nimbkar, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur.

These Indian novelists have dealt with the Indian society which has rich and diverse traditions. They have looked at the dilemmas of Indian women in different perspectives. Therefore, the attitude to look at women in general has been changed in recent past. These writers have not only depicted the external actions of their women characters but have also dealt with the psychosomatic realm of their female characters feminine sensibilities. Women novelists like Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur have revealed the women's quest for self, an exploration into the female psyche and an awareness of the mysteries of life. They make straight journey into the consciousness of their women characters. Their female protagonists are torn due to



the pressures created by the conflict between the individual and the environment in which they are placed. They have tried to recognize the Indian women in a better way and depict them in their fiction.

Jai Nimbkar is one of the eminent feminist. In her novel, *Temporary Answers*, a very famous novel, she relates the story of a female protagonist, Vineeta who searches her own identity just as Jyoti does in *A Joint Venture*. The novel is deep rooted study of Vineeta's personal problems which are psychological as well as individualized. Her love is probably a need, a subtle form of self-love or an instrument that could fight with her loneliness that has finally began to dehumanize her. Therefore, she remarks that:

*"She was only marrying because she wanted to form the wall, escape from her now that she knows she was running away from herself, she would, she has to stop running."*<sup>21</sup>

As a feminine one, she is an emotionally disturbed woman who is skeptical about her family relationship. Jai Nimbkar, in her novel *A Joint Venture* depicts the story of the young, educated female's (Jyoti's) experience of an extremely orthodox family and social systems in Metropolitan society, as a feminine one. The novel opens with the starching decision of the female protagonist who leaves her husband after having spent a happy married life of 30 years. Her husband, Ram, is a successful and a well-established businessman in Pune. As female protagonist, Jyoti finds herself her identity and states that:

*"I have had enough. I want to get out."*<sup>22</sup>

Anita Desai in her fiction searches out the causes of marital discord by presenting it from women's sensibility point of view. It reveals that Desai's fiction focuses on the struggles of middle class and Anglicized women. These women attempt to come out of social limitation imposed upon them by the society. This attempt makes them alienated from the family and society and finally their marriage gets disintegrated.

It throws light on the existentialism philosophy. It explores how Anita Desai projects a tragic vision in her novel by placing the female protagonists in hostile

situations. It also reveals that Desai depicts the modern society, with its ups and downs, and explores the emotional world and sensibility of women in her work of arts.

Anita Desai, in her first novel, *Cry, The Peacock* reveals the ugly psychosomatic fight fought in the mind of the female protagonist, Maya. She is showed as a tormented soul. She doesn't develop out of her childhood world. She shows very little disposition to take up adult accountabilities. She feels that nobody in the world loves or cares her. She is dreamy, oversensitive and emotive. Her husband, Gautama is truthful, indifferent and balanced. Maya's matchless nature, her atypical relationship with her father, her unsatisfactory marital bonds, Toto's death, fortune-teller's prediction, her barrenness, drive her slowly and surely to a state of psychological syndrome.

Her third novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* inquiries into the awareness of the female protagonist, Sita. Being schizophrenic, she fails to adjust to the demands of her role as a wife and mother. She is a happily married woman of over forty. She is the mother of four children. Her husband, Raman is a prosperous businessman and a caring hubby. When she is pregnant for the fifth time, she begins to suffer from eccentric isolation, impatience and monotony in her life. She also begins to think that nobody in the world cares for her. Being bored with the life, she adopts escape as the strategy of her existence. She escapes to her childhood world, 'MANORI'. Finally, she comes to know that her childhood world is not her destination and that's why she comes back to her husband's house.

Manju Kapur is an Indian writer who concentrates on women's problems and narrates each and every aspect of human relationship. Female protagonists in Manju Kapur's novels symbolize the overpowering materialism and the lack of spirituality that characterizes modern age. Indian English writing or Post-Modern writing tends towards the effect of alienation in the work of art. It is called exile in literature. It also aims the cultural differences of the migrated Indians all over the worlds. Manju Kapur is notable for her depiction of the lives of the poorer castes in traditional Indian society. In her novels, she portrays the human lives which are stagnated in the mire of personal disappointment and sexual insinuations. She also tries to expose the essential

artificiality of the society. All her novels have a direct, one to one relationship with society. She also draws a realistic and sympathetic portrait of the poor of this country.

*Difficult Daughters* is the story of a woman tattered between family responsibility, the yearning for learning, and illegitimate love. Virmati is a young woman born in Amritsar into a strict and generous household. She falls in love with a neighbour, who is the professor and is already married.

*A Married Woman* is the story of Astha the female protagonist of the novel. It describes the different phases in the life of Astha i. e. pre and post marriage phases. Astha's life from the beginning has been restricted by her mother. Her mother has always forced Astha to behave according to her wish. She is compelled by her mother to follow her decisions. Her mother is a typical Indian mother who focuses all her vigor on molding Astha. She always wanted her daughter to be obedient daughter, an ideal wife, daughter-in-law and a faultless mother. After two temporary affairs, Astha settles with Hemant as his wife through arranged marriage.

Shashi Deshpande holds great worth as an Indian English woman novelist. She is the only Indian author who has made bold attempts at giving a voice to the disappointments and frustrations of women despite her vehement denial of being feminist. She has published many novels and collections of short stories. Some of them are, *Roots and Shadows* (1973), *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *If I Die Today* (1982), *A Matter of Time and The Narayanpur Incident* (1982), *Come up and Be Dead* (1983), *That Long Silence* (1988), *The Binding Vine* (1992), *The Intrusion and Other Stories* (1993). Out of these, the researcher has selected her two novels for the study. They are *The Dark Holds No Terror* and *That Long Silence*.

*The Dark Holds No Terror*, Shashi Deshpande's second novel, is about the traumatic experience the female protagonist Saru undergoes as her husband refuses to play a second-fiddle role. She undergoes great humiliation and neglect as a child and, after marriage as a wife. Deshpande focuses on the blatant sex prejudice shown by her parents towards their daughters and their craving to have a male child. Saru is a practicing doctor and naturally after marriage, she gains higher status than her husband, Manohar. She is greeted and respected more by the people in front of Manohar. He does not like this. It causes the clash between them. He suffers from

sense of inferiority complex and feels humiliated. It develops sadism in him. Out of frustration, Manu revenges on Saru in the form of sexual sadism. The novelist has depicted it intensely.

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*, is about the female protagonist, Jaya. In spite of playing the role of a wife and mother ardently, Jaya has to suffer from loneliness and estrangement. In her feminine sensibility she feels that she has been unfair to herself as well as to her career as a writer. She thinks that she has done it out of fear of inviting any discontentment from her husband. Her fear to hurt her husband is so intense that she even fails to acknowledge her friendship with Kamat. It is really important that Shashi Deshpande, through her male characters, presents Indian masculinities. She does not dehumanize the male characters. She depicts male characters as living creatures but at the same time she successfully presents the predicaments of Indian middle class women. The greed for materialistic life is the main reason of the suffering of male as well as women in the society.

In Indian society the admission of defeat of the wife is ensured through socialization of a girl child. It begins in her early childhood and continues well into her youth and age of maturity. The parents of girl children train their daughters to believe, converse, uniform and act in such a way as to give preference to the males around them. They are expected to follow the stereotypical and mythical figures like Sita, Savitri, Draupadi and Gandhari. As Simone De Beauvoir observes:

*“One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature which is described as feminine”.*<sup>23</sup>

However, in the course of time as they grow and educate themselves, education particularly creates awareness in them the sense of individuality and parity. This sense of identity and equality clashes with their training of submission and obedience.

Shashi Deshpande very deftly handles this tension between convention and modernity in her novels. Her female protagonists find themselves caught between the tradition and modernity. Her novels demonstrate how the socialization of girl is done and what negative effects are of racially indomitable concepts of marriage and wifhood on Indian women. Indian society which is male dominated society never

visualizes women as individuals. Since ages it has been visualizing women in the traditionally assigned roles. Adhikari Madhumalati in one of her research articles writes:

*“Women as mothers, daughters, sisters and wives who care for others, never as individuals”.*<sup>24</sup>

The Indian women also accept this status without challenging it as they are brought up in the atmosphere in which they are compelled by conventions to imitate mythological women.

### **1.5 Rationale of the study**

This research work will assist the readers to appreciate the voyage of Indian women from a characteristically conventional woman into an extremely contemporary, well-read and self-governing woman. It will help out the readers to realize that how women are becoming watchful and aware of their rights and how they are coming out of their narrow world and acquiring new positions in the modern society. It will also give the readers new insight and new way of looking at the lives of the women. This research work will contribute to feminist basis of woman's empowerment to some extent.

In present research work, the female writers explore how the cries of Indian women go unheard and her pain goes unfelt. It explores how the desires, aspirations and dreams of women come to an end when a woman gets married and starts to live in the home of her husband. It reveals how female protagonists' emotional needs are refused by her husband who is the follower of detachment theory. It also reveals that female protagonist's neurotic behavior is the result of her difference with her husband in respect of age, temperament and philosophy. It studies that feminism is a part of humanism and through this potential of women may be recognized and women can express themselves very freely and fearlessly. It suggests that Indian Feminism must be welfare oriented and it should target female feticide, female illiteracy, child marriage, malnutrition, dowry system all evils and violence against women community. It reveals that women in India are marginalized as they perform every work at home as well as work outside still they do not get the status of working women.

## 1.6 Review of the Related Research Literature:

A great deal of work has been done so far on various Indian, American, African and British novelists in English. The main findings are regarding their style of writing and subject matter. A lot of work has been focused on portrayal of orientals in literature. The researcher thought it appropriate to focus on the depiction of the female protagonist from their image, quest for identity, feminine sensibility, their revolt against patriarchy and their relationship with their husbands' point of view. The researcher has come across with the following research focusing on post-independence literature.

The purpose of the review of the related literature is to take a review of the research already done on the topic. It considers the previous studies done by the researchers which are related to the present study. The knowledge and information show the clear past picture of the study up to what the line of the research has come. It will also give the proper direction and guidance to researcher so that he can handle his study with full confidence and accuracy. Only those studies that are plainly relevant, completely executed and clearly reported are included.

The critical books and the abstracts of the following papers on the writing of these novelists in national and international seminars and conferences, show that the writing of these novelists furnish opulent opportunities and potentialities of carrying out research on many concealed issues and aspects in their writings.

- “*The Projection of Woman in the Modern Indian Novels in English*” is the topic of Bamane S. for her Ph.D. thesis submitted in 2006. In her thesis she deals with the two female characters, Vineeta and Jyoti who are the protagonists of Jai Nimbkar’s novels *Temporary Answers* and of *A Joint Venture* respectively.<sup>25</sup>
- “*Jai Nimbkar’s Fiction: Study in Characterization, Themes, Narrative Techniques and Style*” is the topic of Borate T. S. for his M.Phil. He speaks about the women characters, the theme of ‘self-identity’ and ‘independence’. This scholarly thesis justifies the narrative techniques used by Jai Nimbkar which fulfilled the meaning and point of view of the writer.<sup>26</sup>
- Dani A. P. in his research article “*Jai Nimbkar’s Fictional World of Transience*” published in ‘The Journal of Indian Writing in English’ of April,

2011 tries to show that Jai Nimbkar's three novels demonstrate the problem of individuality for the so called liberated New Woman in India. He has raised some questions about the acts of the three protagonists of Jai Nimbkar, Vineeta, Jyoti and Ann.<sup>27</sup>

- Munmi Sen in her research article "Bondage" "Patriarchy" and "Feminine" in Anita Desai's Novels: A Silent Revolt claims that Anita Desai has given a voice to the new Indian woman. He also states that like Virginia Woolf of western feminist literary paradigm, Desai has created woman characters through her novels who are no more symbolic "Shakti" mother Goddess, subverted and suppressed in the "andarmahal". They are human beings who seek liberation, move from bondage to freedom from meek indecision to self-assertion from weakness to strength.<sup>28</sup>
- Well-known writers, Seema Rana and Beniwal Annup, (2010), in "*Contemporary Indian Writing in English And The Problematic of the Indian Class*" attempts to analyze whether these writers give a deeper insight into the middle-class ethos and culture. They have tried to attempt whether there is an attitude of complaint to rouse the sense of right and wrong of society. It is also discussed whether the writers have projected different and serious issues and problems of women that exist in the contemporary society or have they offered solutions to these problems and issues. They have analyzed the novels of present day women novelists like Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Kiran Desai and Anita Nair.<sup>29</sup>
- Dr. N. Rama Devi in her research paper "*Jaya's Quest for Self in Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence*" states that Jaya herself is partly responsible for the loss of her real self. In her effort to be an ideal wife she loses her life in the name of sacrifice.<sup>30</sup>
- Another scholar, Chitra, B. (2010), in her research paper 'The Enigmatic Maya in Anita Desai's *Cry, The Peacock* centers on the exploration of sensibility and psychology of female protagonist of the Anita Desai's novel. It reveals how author depicts the mood, observation, detachment and abnormal behavior of protagonist, Maya. It also shows that how writer has portrayed Indian women's fears, insecurity, loneliness and sufferings through Maya.<sup>31</sup>

- Huse, Santosh, (2011), in his article *The New Woman In The Novels of Manju Kapur* writes about the emergence of a new Indian woman in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman*. The novelist tries to present Astha, the female protagonist of the novel, as different from other ordinary, conservative woman in India. How does she struggle against the male supremacy is best discussed here.<sup>32</sup>
- The researchers, Sheeba, Azhar, Syed, Abid Ali, (2012), in their research paper '*Portrayal of Indian Middle Class Women in Manu Kapur's Novels: Aspirations and Realities*' analyze the issues related to middle class or upper middle class women. They discuss the problems associated with this class of the society by giving reference of the novels like *Home*, *Difficult Daughters* and *A Married Woman* by Manju Kapur.<sup>33</sup>
- Research scholars, P. Samuel and P. Hephjibha (2012), in '*Human Relationships: In The Novel Difficult Daughters By Manju Kapur*' throw light on the man woman relationships in *Difficult Daughters* of Manju Kapur. It examines the intellectual and emotional dilemma of Virmati, the protagonist in the partition and post partition days.<sup>34</sup>

### **1.7 Statement of the Problem:**

The story of the human race begins with the female because it is she who carries the original human chromosome. It is sad that the generations of historians have regarded 'Man' as the star whereas in reality it is the woman who deserves the status of a star. The future for humanity depends on her labour, her skill, her biology which holds the key to the destiny of the human race.

The novelists and their novels under the study show how women and their roles in the society are significant. All of them underline that women should be given equal status and to achieve that all of the female protagonists fight against pressure of tradition, patriarchy, and humiliation. However, each protagonist has her own unique way to fight male domination and to establish her self-identity.



## **1.8 Aims and Objectives of the research**

The aim of the present research work is to study the female protagonist in selected novels of Jai Nimbkar, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande as well as Manju Kapur.

1. To study in brief historical development of Indian English Novel with the emergence of Indian English Women Novelists on the literary horizons.
2. To study the female protagonists in the select novels of Jai Nimbkar, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur.
3. To study the changing image of the female protagonists in the select novels and thereby to understand different shades of their identities.
4. To provide a graph of female protagonists from submissive to the new identity and thereby to understand the typical human condition.
5. To provide a comprehensive critical statement.

## **1.9 Hypothesis**

It is taken into consideration in the present research work that the novels under study of Jai Nimbkar, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur provide a major canvas to the female protagonists. The female protagonists emerge as rebellious and struggling to set their new identity.

## **1.10 Data Collection:**

The collected data would be in the form of the primary and secondary sources.

- a. **Primary Sources:** The eight novels of four novelists and their other works would form the primary sources.
- b. **Secondary Sources:** The reviews and articles published in various journals, magazines and in the books.

### **1.11 Scope and Limitations:**

The present study is limited to the study of female protagonists in the select novels of Jai Nimbkar, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur". The study will be limited to Jai Nimbkar's *Temporary Answers* and *A Joint Venture*, Anita Desai's *Cry the Peacock* and *Where Shall We Go This Summer*, Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terror* and *That Long Silence* and Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* and *A Married Woman*. It will be limited to these novelists and their eight novels only.

### **1.12 Research Methodology:**

The analytical, interpretative and comparative methodology will be used for the present research work. The emphasis will be laid on the close reading of the primary and secondary data available on the subject, visit to various libraries for the collection of relevant information. Besides, discussion would be done with the persons who have done similar kind of study. Moreover, if possible the interview of the concerned writers will be added to strengthen the argument. In the light of said methodology, the following tentative chapter scheme will be framed.

### **1.13 Chapter Scheme:**

The proposed research work is divided into following chapters broadly:

#### **Chapter I: Introduction:**

The first chapter of this research work would deal with the brief history of Indian English women novelists. This chapter would also take the sweeping survey of pre-independence and post-independence Indian English women novelists. The concept of feminism and the difference between Indian feminism and western feminism if any would be dealt in this chapter in short.

#### **Chapter II: Tradition Bound Female Protagonists in Jai Nimbkar's Novels**

In the second chapter, the female protagonists in the select novels of Jai Nimbkar (*Temporary Answers*, *A Joint Venture*) would be studied critically. The study would be restricted to five aspects of the female protagonist of each novel. They

are image of a female protagonist in the novel, her quest for self-identity, her relationship with her husband, her feminine sensibility and her revolt against patriarchy.

### **Chapter III: Anita Desai's female protagonists as Victims of Neurosis**

The female protagonists in the select novels of Anita Desai (*Cry the Peacock*, *Where Shall We Go This Summer*) would be studied critically in chapter no. III. The study would be restricted to five aspects of the female protagonist of each novel. They are image of a female protagonist in the novel, her quest for self-identity, her relationship with her husband, her feminine sensibility and her revolt against patriarchy and social norms.

### **Chapter IV: Sexual Dilemma in Shashi Deshpande's Female Protagonists**

In chapter no. IV, the female protagonists in the select novels of Shashi Deshpande (*The Dark Holds No Terror*, *That Long Silence*.) would be studied critically. The study would be restricted to five aspects of the female protagonist of each novel. They are image of a female protagonist in the novel, her quest for self-identity, her relationship with her husband, her feminine sensibility and her revolt against patriarchy and social norms.

### **Chapter V: Feminist Stance in Manju Kapur's Female Protagonists**

In chapter no. V, the female protagonists in the select novels of Manju Kapur (*Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*) would be studied critically. The study would be restricted to five aspects of the female protagonist of each novel. They are image of a female protagonist in the novel, her quest for self-identity, her relationship with her husband, her feminine sensibility and her revolt against patriarchy and social norms.

### **Chapter VI: Concluding Remarks.**

#### **1.14 Bibliography:**

The bibliography would be prepared of:

- a) Primary Sources (the original works of the author i.e. Jai Nimbkar, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur)

b) Secondary Sources (The reviews, articles, postcolonial works published in various journals, magazines and in the books).

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## CHAPTER II

### TRADITION BOUND FEMALE PROTAGONISTS IN JAI NIMBKAR'S NOVELS

#### 2.1 Introduction:

Jai Nimbkar comes from a very sophisticated Maharastrian family from Pune. It is known for its cultural and societal obligation. She was born in 1932 and was brought up in Pune, the cultural capital of Maharashtra state. She is the eldest daughter of Mr. Dinkar Karve and Mrs. Irawati Karve. Her father was a great sage and social reformer and is famous as Maharshi Karve. Mrs. Irawati Karve was a well-known Marathi writer. Her younger sister is Mrs. Gauri Deshpande who is a well known Marathi writer of short stories and poems. Her brother, Mr. Anand Karve runs an NGO in Pune called 'Arti'. Jai Nimbkar began her career as a writer from a very young age. She has written novels, short stories, articles, reviews. She has also written books in different language. Her contribution to the literary world is of immense importance. At present, she is living with her husband and two daughters in Phaltan a small town in Satara District from North Maharashtra. Her house that is Nimbkar's Bungalow, is very near from the town of Phaltan. It is an ancient, very old-fashioned Maharastrian house. Being surrounded by a forest of trees, the house has a very old-fashioned look and the whole place has a peaceful nature.

As the daughter of Maharshi Karve and Irawati Karve, she has inherited her parent's cultural make up and their social commitment. She is the voracious reader and hence, her writing career has also been greatly influenced by her reading of books, both ancient and modern. Besides writing, Mrs. Jai Nimbkar is interested in farming and spends most of her time doing horticulture. Her daughter Nandini Nimbkar is a renowned alumna of University of Florida, U. S. A.

In all, Jai Nimbkar has written three novels. They are *Temporary Answers*, *A Joint Venture* and *Come Rain*. Besides she has some collections of short stories to her credit. She is one among the renowned feminist writers and therefore, delineates feminism in all her three novels. She, in her novels, has depicted woman in her



search for self. Her female protagonists strive against all the social barriers and the stringency of the societal system. She deals with the theme of marriage in Indian context. She successfully brings out her female protagonists' quest for self. She is a scrupulous artisan and a careful, artistic writer. She frequently gathers stories for her fiction from the ins and outs of day to day life. She has created her space in the world of Indian English fiction. Her female protagonists are smart. They are in the unending quest for self.

Her female protagonists desire to get something distinctive from their life. They succeed in their vocation and they are able to establish their identities completely. Her female protagonists are learned, cultured and smart wives. There is existential quest in them. It is being presented by the novelist through incompatible couples or marital discord between husband and wife. There is slow but steady progress in her female protagonists and they become matured in the course of time. Jai Nimbkar has successfully presented the real social condition and family in India. She thinks that a literary artist being social reformist must have a straight or indirect connection with society. There should be the genuine relevance between society and their works. Therefore, she constantly in her own unique way focuses on marriage and women issues which are at the centre of social problems.

Her Female protagonists are integrated persons and they combine both social and personal lives in a pleasant-sounding way. She effectively presents the subjugated and demoralized condition of the women in an orthodox Indian society. She augments the woman predicament through her writing to get equivalent openings. Indian women always fulfill their quest for self within the precincts of the socio-cultural setting.

Jai Nimbkar's female protagonists fight against the atrocities inflicted on them by the society but the important thing is that they never spoil the ecstasy of their conjugal life. They always cleverly find the middle way and solve their problems. They are strong enough and don't negotiate and submit to the atrocities of male domination. Her female protagonists never cross the social boundaries set for women. Vineeta of *Temporary Answers* and Jyoti of *A Joint Venture* are the two female protagonists of the novels under study. They encounter various problems in their conjugal life very courageously and wisely and succeed to establish their

individuality. Jai Nimbkar is well aware that the marriage, as an institution gives special treatment to men and not to women. Therefore, she has shown her concerns for this fact through her two novels under study. In Dr. G. Hampamma's words Jai Nimbkar's:

*“characters are torn between a search for an authentic existence and the limitations of the human situation that prevent them from such realizations”.*<sup>1</sup>

## **2.2 Temporary Answers**

### **2.2.1 Image of woman**

Vineeta is the female protagonist of *Temporary Answers*. She faces all obstacles in her life very valiantly and wisely. She succeeds in achieving her aim to establish her individuality. She controls her emotions and sets up a smooth congenial life with her husband, Nagendra. Moreover, she does not desire to harm other's independence or individuality in her journey to create and enjoy her own autonomy. She is strong and determined enough to achieve her will. She analyzes each and every aspect of life. She thinks in all directions, into the past, onto the present and into the future as well.

Vineeta is made to encounter major catastrophe in her life. She is married to Nagendra. She becomes widow when she is only thirty year old. She is without any job and is deep rooted in Indian civilization and customs. In the beginning after becoming widow she is afraid and not ready to face her relatives. She behaves as if she is an outsider. Though she is a doctor and educated, she is caught between her inner fear of society and her modern liberal way of thinking to get her 'self' identity. She strives with her inner conflict and finds herself caught between tradition and modernity, culture and wishes for freedom, career and remarriage. She faces a lot of obstacles in her course of life. With the help of her mother and her friend Kishori, she manages to break the tradition of India that confines the widow within the four walls to live a somber life and comes out of the tradition. She meets with the question of a secured marriage and at the same time she is painstakingly trying to mould her present life as a single individual and autonomous working woman. She has hesitant attitude towards marriage therefore she has to face some social

problems. She has learnt a lot from her first experience of marriage and therefore, she does not want to repeat the same mistake when she gets second chance of marriage. In a human life particularly in woman's life the marriage brings many changes. The striking change is that she loses all her freedom. She becomes the slave. But Vineeta is a bright, contemporary, cultured woman and hence she preserves her identity and does not allow it to be defeated by her counterparts. In case of remarriage of a widow, Vineeta Dr. M.S. Pawar writes that:

*“Nimbkar portrays her widow protagonist, her awakening and her resistance to regressive pressures that come more from within than from without, because the chances for a widow to get remarried are meager and also self respect is at stake, when it comes to her remarriage”.*<sup>2</sup>

Doubtlessly, Vineeta is a modern woman but she does not discard the old traditions totally. She cannot be said belonging totally to old generation or to ultra-modern new generation. She is introvert therefore she couldn't share her experiences and feelings with her sister or mother. Her younger sister, Madhuri elopes with a boy from lower caste. When she comes back to house, she becomes susceptible and discouraged, however, Vineeta fails to console and support her sister because of her introvert nature.

Vineeta has to rethink her decision of remarriage because of discrimination of sex and the secondary position of woman in the family. At the most crucial stage in the story, when Vineeta and Abhijit face each other for a final take on their relationship, Vineeta's previous marriage with Nagendra emerges up in the back ground. At the time of marriage with Nagendra, Vineeta was just a young girl. She was all ignorant about life. She was a marriageable young girl from a poor family. She always begged to God to give her a decent husband. She wished to live a happy life. Therefore she was very happy when Nagendra expressed his desire to marry her. He was a very eligible bachelor for her, came from a rich family. He had a steady job and was even handsome to look at. He also offered to have a simple marriage with her, without the usual demands for dowry. So, Vineeta couldn't expect to get a better man to marry than Nagendra. Her courtship and honeymoon with Nagendra was really a fairy tale. He attended to every wish and desire of hers, with the slightest notice. Therefore, the early stage of their marriage was a smooth

period for her. In the course of time, the things changed. Vineeta began to feel that only she was making all the sacrifices to adjust to her husband. She tried her best to give up herself to please Nagendra. He was her big patron because he was kind enough to marry her. Therefore she did everything Nagendra expected her to do. If Nagendra liked weak tea with plenty of milk and sugar, she too drank it though she had previously never liked such tea. She even tried to socialize with his associates for his sake. Though Vineeta made all these sacrifices willingly, she was angry and disturbed within her:

*“I even learnt to put up good naturedly with a moderate amount of flirting from the other men. But inside I rebelled against it all.”<sup>3</sup>*

Though she is a modern woman, she does not reject the old traditions outright. She belongs neither to old generation nor to ultra modern new generation. Therefore, she couldn't share her experiences and feelings with her sister or mother. That is why she could not help her younger sister Madhuri who is vulnerable and frustrated after her elopement with a boy of lower caste. When Vineeta is in a reminiscent mood, she remembers how Nagendra usually did not spend much time with her. On the contrary, he has a lot of friends with whom they both used to go out and have fun. For a long time she tried her level best to mix up in the elite society but she felt that she was not matching with them. She says:

*“Nagendra had his group and the same faces turned up everywhere. I tried to feel part of them but couldn't.”<sup>4</sup>*

Actually, she feels herself to be odd woman out in this highly showy society. She felt chocked inside herself. This relationship ends with the unnatural death of her husband, so she begins to look for a perfect match for life, with whom she can enjoy the real joy of a perfect marriage.

Vineeta's parent's marriage revolved around the fact that in the traditional marriage all the burden was set on the women's shoulders and man never cooperated. Her mother took the full responsibility to look after and serve her in-laws. She had to care for four children after her mother-in-laws' death. Vineeta remembered her mother's words that she used to say:

*“When I am home he calls me every five minutes. He wants me to pour a glass of water so that he can swallow a capsule, he wants a book, he wants his legs pressed, he wants to be dried if he perspires.”*<sup>5</sup>

Her mother’s life was spent serving the family in the multiple roles of a daughter-in-law, a wife, a mother of three children, a teacher and manager of all household. Indian women naturally know very well to manage their family, job and motherhood along with other responsibilities. It is probably the high handedness of men that motivate women to try her best to stand on her own feet.

### **2.2.2 Vineeta’s Quest for Self-Identity**

Vineeta, the female protagonist of the *Temporary Answers* is very cautious towards getting her ‘self’ identity. At the same time, she takes care of not to root out herself from the age old foundations. She knows it well that while running behind new concept of self identity, she is leaving her ancient tradition which is her first identity. Now-a-days everybody is busy in coordinating their own desire, own achievement and own identity. But human being especially women should not forget that in India particularly, they are the carriers of the traditions and customs from one generation to the other. Women are, since ages playing their part in multitude activities and also doing well. Though there is an emergence of new traditions, typical Indian women never drift from their age-old respected traditions.

The quest for realizing a unique identity, self identity can be clearly seen in the female protagonist, Vineeta. She longs for self identity and struggles with all the hurdles and the rigidity of the social system. When the novel opens she is living with her parents as a widow after the unnatural death of her husband, Nagendra and she has not left home for quite some time. She is in an extremely passive and grim mood when she comes across her old friend Kishori, who invites her to an informal dinner on the following day. But she is afraid of any kind of attachment for human beings. In the beginning she cannot avoid the socio-cultural milieu but faces bravely her misfortune of a sudden and early widowhood. She goes through various moods and conflicting states of mind. Her keen observation of married relations makes her to wake up, to be emotionally independent. In her opinion, marriage and love are the

permanent answers to evade her seclusion. The necessity is of equality and respect between husband and wife.

In the beginning, we see Vineeta, the female protagonist of the novel as a normal and destitute woman who is not self-assured about anything. But in the course of time she develops and tries to establish her individuality. At the later stage, we see her as practicing physician. She also works for a charity hospital. After that she gets tangled with Abhijit. She decides to marry him. At the end of the novel, she realizes that emotive slavery is not strength. It is feebleness. She also realizes that it is necessary to overwhelm it.

Vineeta marries Nagendra and very soon gets knotted to him emotionally. She was a doctor but she was not practicing doctor. Therefore, she thinks as:

*“The existence of a husband had justified my non-working status”.*<sup>6</sup>

Between her getting married to Nagendra and her becoming widow, she had no other identity than Nagendra’s wife. During this period, she desired to own him completely but Nagendra did not allow her to do so. She admits that for many times this was the reason for bitter fights between them. She simply felt that she had given all of herself to Nagendra and in return, he must give all of himself to her. Therefore, she says:

*“Yes, I felt I gave all of myself and in return I should have all of him. It was unfair, but at the time I did not have enough balance to see this. So we had bitter fights”.*<sup>7</sup>

In the beginning, she wants to become Nagendra’s wife therefore she sacrifices her ‘self’. She shapes her conduct, her clothing and her everything according to other women of her in-law’s house and the society. She says:

*“I learned to be like them outwardly. Dress like them, talk like them.”*<sup>8</sup>

As a result, after Nagendra’s death Vineeta has to face a void and emptiness. She experiences and feels that she is no one without Nagendra. In fact, she has degree in medicine however she is not sure whether she would be able to practice as a doctor or not. She lacks confidence. She is so frail that even at the age of 28, she is

unable to proclaim her 'identity'. Even at this age, when she was late at night, she used to be remorseful to her mother. Her mother, being disciplined, did not like this. Therefore, she does not like her mother.

Being low in confidence, she goes to a Swami. She is taken to Swami by her friend, Kishori. Vineeta hopes that through Swami she would be able to recover her confidence. When Swami asks her what is that she is frightened of. She tells him that she is frightened of "*The possibility of failure*"<sup>9</sup> She experiences emptiness in her life. She thinks about herself as incapable of doing anything. She is in so hopeless position that she tells the Swami:

*"I have nothing to hope for, live for"*.<sup>10</sup>

She was a doctor and an educated person, therefore, she soon recovers and recognizes the vainness of the search for some such miracle worker and she tells herself:

*"He is not a miracle worker."*<sup>11</sup>

Vilas, a family friend and a doctor by profession, makes an entry in her life. Vineeta is in hopeless state of mind and has shattered her inner self. He offers her enterprise. She slowly, with the help of Vilas, succeeds in getting her self-confidence. She takes a decision to work as a doctor. She believes Vilas and therefore entrusts the whole thing to him and lets him make all the planning for her. He was the decision maker. However he never forgets to consult Vineeta about his plans and estimates. Therefore, she finds it very comforting to entrust her life into Vilas' hand. She finds:

*"I found it very comforting to entrust my life once again into a man's hands."*<sup>12</sup>

Even though, she begins to go of the house and mix up with the people, she still lacks self-confidence. In the initial days of her practice as a doctor, she had to wait for the patients and when patients do not turn up she used to become restless and disillusioned. She felt herself to be "*a fool*"<sup>13</sup>. She did not like to sit there for hours and wait for the patients. It was really a tiresome business.

One day, her landlady asked her whether she would like to work for a charity hospital run by an association. She shows lack of sureness. She is not sure whether she will be able to handle the patients there or not, therefore, she advises the landlady to look for somebody who is an experienced doctor. She asks her if she didn't feel the necessity to look for "*someone with more experience?*"<sup>14</sup>

Slowly but steadily the situation transforms and Vineeta becomes economically self-sufficient and automatically gathers poise. She begins to work as a doctor with confidence. As time passes, she grows up and feels the need to proclaim herself. She becomes strong and she is no longer timid and docile or remorseful to her mother. She learns to make excuses when asked by her mother to reason for something. She also learns that there are some questions which need not to be responded or answered. Her mother is very cautious about her daughters' activities. Therefore, if her daughter gets late, she used to ask reasons for her getting late. The following dialogue between Vineeta and her mother makes it clear.

*"Mother said, 'Where have you been?'*

*'I went to the library.'*

*'You were in the library all this time? Vilas was here and he said you had left the office hours ago.'*

*For a moment I toyed with the idea of mumbling about house-calls, but I decided it was time to grow up.*

*I said, 'I met Professor Gokhale there. We got to talking and I didn't realize it was so late.'*

*'It must have been a very interesting conversation,' she said.*

*I didn't think this needed a response."<sup>15</sup>*

Perhaps because of her self-sufficiency and busy schedule, day by day it was becoming difficult for her to continue to live with her parents. She feels fed up with the same talking and her parents doing the same things again and again. She thinks



that she has been matured and grown away from her parents. She doesn't want to continue to live with her parents. Now she feels that it is impossible for her to become one with parents. All the time, her consciousness is occupied by the thoughts about Abhijit, her work at the office and the charity hospital. It becomes highly impossible for her to face her mother's looks and answer her questions. This agitates her. Therefore, she resolves to separate herself from parents' house and live independently. She expresses her thoughts as:

*"I really would like to have a place of my own..... I find I can't fit into mother's household any longer. I have grown away from them and I find little things get on my nerves."*<sup>16</sup>

She starts to live on her own and leaves behind weak, timid and docile Vineeta. Now, she is very anxious about her work as a doctor, as a social worker and her relationship with Abhijit. She does not work for money only but she really gets involved in it. She starts a milk centre for poor children. In the course of time, she becomes bold enough to combat with the system to execute her plans about her work. One day, Vilas proposes her for marriage but she declines it. She does so because she does not wish to suffer the dreadful experience of submissiveness for a second time. She clearly tells him that she is not going to marry again:

*"I am not going to marry again, Vilas.*

*Once was enough?"*<sup>17</sup>

Vineeta declines the proposal of Vilas but she is helpless and gets tangled with people. She gets tangled with Abhijit. She has very good interaction with him. When Vineeta sees the people, who helped her to start the milk centre, are beating the drums of their praise in the inauguration function, she feels very distressed. During all that time, the children have to wait for long time for the milk. She feels that they are giving the children a fraction of the minimum. But she becomes more frustrated when she sees that no one is there to share her view. Everybody there was dandy and dramatic and was pretending himself to be selfless. As a result, Vineeta's confidence is somewhat weakened. Later on she talks with Abhijit about it and seeks consolation.

When Vineeta feels like a freak, it is Abhijit who gives her confidence and tells her. *'You are no freak'*.<sup>18</sup> In the beginning, their relationship is mostly on the rational level. The conversation between Vineeta and Abhijit shows that their relationship is on the rational level and not on emotional level.

*'Don't you like your work?'*

*'I like the fact that I am doing it. It gives me a little self-respect which is very important to me just now. But it troubles me that I didn't go into this line of work because I have any particular sense of dedication. It was not a matter of positive choice at all.....'*

*'You are wrong. Most people start at random. They just drift into something they don't mind doing. I went into teaching because my father was a professor..... . A series of accidents, or even negative choices, finally lead you to something, which you want to make your life's work.'*<sup>19</sup>

In the course of time, the relationship between Vineeta and Abhijit changes from rational to passionate level. She gets more and more drawn in with Abhijit. She wanted to be independent therefore even at this juncture; she fears emotive bondage. She feels it will make her reliant. She does not wish to endure the horrible experience again by marrying Abhijit. Therefore, she requests Abhijit to help her. However, when Abhijit promises to help her by loving her, she considers it to be a temporary answer. Abhijit really loves her and he expresses his love but Vineeta is not sure that Abhijit's love would help her solve her all problems. For that, she wanted to have permanent solution. She says:

*'That's only a temporary answer'.*

*'That's all we have, temporary answers. What more can you ask for?'*<sup>20</sup>

Vineeta is now sure that wedding and the feeling of love are not permanent solutions for her problems. For her, marriage means making someone the axis of your life around that one has to move. She doesn't want to do that again. For her, marrying Nagendra and making him the centre of her life was enough. Therefore, she is not able to take decision about her relationship with Abhijit. She is perplexed

and is not able to take decision. However, when Abhijit leaves her for some days and she hears nothing from him, she feels frustrated. She has only the thoughts of Abhijit in her mind. She doubts that he might have forgotten and stopped loving her. When Abhijit comes back, she tells him what happened with her when she did not hear anything from him.

*“Can it really be that you don’t know? Haven’t you any idea what I went through, waiting for you or some word from you, wondering what had happened to you, wondering if you had stopped caring?”<sup>21</sup>*

She thinks that her relationship with Abhijit would be on the same line as the relationship between herself and Nagendra. She is now sure that there won’t be any difference. She feels that there would be the same emotive bondage, the same frustrations, the same worry and the same struggle to overpower another man. Abhijit promises her but she is not ready to believe that after marriage with Abhijit the things will be different. She pronounces:

*“You said it will be different, but it isn’t. People don’t change. At least I don’t, I can’t. If you marry me, it will be like marrying an alcoholic, hoping to reform him. The only sane thing you can do is give me up. Leave me alone.”<sup>22</sup>*

In spite of this, sometimes she finds Abhijit’s love very soothing. However, Vineeta is trapped between her love for Abhijit and dread of emotional dependence. Anyhow, she decides to marry him. Therefore, she writes to Nagendra’s parents to inform them about her decision of remarriage. On her mother-in-laws request, she goes to see them and she is upset to see the pathetic situation of Nagendra’s parents. She is stunned to see the condition of her mother-in-law and father-in-law. Thus she utters:

*“Can you become so dependent on one person that his death, for all practical purposes, causes your death?”<sup>23</sup>*

Then, Vineeta wants to continue the same relationship with Abhijit instead of marrying him. She feels that it will give her some sort of freedom. However, she understands the limitations of human relations when Abhijit expresses his desire to

go to some isolated place. He wants to refresh himself. He also tells her that it is his usual practice that whenever he finds himself at dead end he goes to abandoned place and convalesce his spiritual power. Vineeta feels frustrated that if she shares every problem with Abhijit and why cannot he. Perhaps this is the limitation of man-made relationship. This makes Vineeta think about their relationship in a new perspective. She feels that he should be able to achieve mental peace and balance through her. For her that is the meaning of marriage. A couple should be able to find mental peace and balance through each other. Their relationship should be reciprocal to each other. She reflects:

*“Perhaps this was the way he used to renew himself, receive strength to get over his problems. But didn’t I make any difference? Couldn’t he achieve mental peace and balance through me? Isn’t that the whole idea of marriage? I had always talked to him of my problems and frustrations. I had found that it helped even when there was nothing he could concretely do. I had taken for granted a reciprocity which had not existed.”*<sup>24</sup>

In her opinion, the relationship between man and woman should be reciprocal but it was not true in their case. Therefore, she understands the futility and vainness of such relationship. She also understands that her running after Abhijit or decision to marry him is nothing but it is an attempt to escape from her ‘self’. Therefore, she feels that she would have to put an end to this.

*‘Now that I knew I was running away from myself, I would have to stop running.’*<sup>25</sup>

Even in her work as a doctor, she finds it difficult to go beyond her ‘self’. She is not able to have proper communication with her visitors and patients. She recognizes that she fails to fit in herself to the same class of her patients and visitors. She feels that her world and her patients’ world are different worlds.

*‘We lived in different worlds and they belonged very much to their world and I to mine. There was no overlapping.’*<sup>26</sup>

Vineeta works selflessly at charity hospital and milk centre for children. But this is also not a permanent answer to her problems because still she has a strong

desire to have Abhijit for herself. Therefore, she comprehends that love; affection is not a power, but rather a weak point. It makes one dependent and she doesn't want to be dependent. Hence, finally she resolves not to marry again which would make her feeble, servile, meek and docile.

*"I could not remain lame, crippled, only half a person and expect him to always lend me support, the illusion of wholeness."* <sup>27</sup>

Vineeta wants to create the reality of wholeness. Therefore, she requests Abhijit to allow her to handle her problems in her own way and as per her desire. She thinks that she will be able to overcome her restrictions. Though not sure whether she will be able to control her problems, she believes that she will do her best and try to be successful.

### **2.2.3 Husband-Wife relationship**

Vineeta is an ordinary looking girl. Therefore, her parents are worried about her marriage. No doubt she is highly educated and she was doctor too. One day, Vineeta happens to meet Nagendra in a marriage ceremony of a common friend and he also happens to attract at Vineeta in that first meeting. He makes her to talk about herself. Vineeta is a shy girl as well as the girl having inferiority complex due to her ordinary looks. In spite of her tendency of not mixing with other people, she is impressed by Nagendra's skill of communication and is compelled to open up. She gets her confidence while talking with him. After that incident both continue to communicate with each other through letters. In the beginning, it is out of reach of Vineeta to understand that a young man like Nagendra who is rich, good looking and with whom the most good-looking and fascinating girls would have wished to marry her. Anyhow, in the course of time, they get married with their parents' consent.

Vineeta is very happy in the beginning days of her marriage. Nagendra is paying attention to her every demand and her every requirement. He speaks with her pleasantly. Both enjoy each other's company. They are very happy when they are together. Nagendra never brings his office work at home as he wants to spend every possible moment with Vineeta. Vineeta also accepts the traditional role of a wife believing that Nagendra will like it. Therefore, she discontinues her medical practice. Nagendra never shows his expectations from his wife and Vineeta takes his

silence affirmatively. As a result, she can never know Nagendra's expectations and she sticks up to typical traditional role of a house wife. On the contrary, there is a sense of superiority in the mind of Nagendra which Vineeta finds out later. She is so sunken into the matrimonial matters that she fails to understand Nagendra's plan to trap her and, therefore, she enthusiastically learns to fit herself in to his plan.

In Indian culture, it is very pathetic that after marriage a woman has to change and adjust herself according to the norms and life style of the in-laws. Nagendra's mother teaches her as to how to behave and treat others in her family as well as in her society. Nagendra also tries to mold her life. As a result, Vineeta behaves as per his guidelines. Being used to simple life, she does not like Nagendra's artificial way of life. Yet she wears his favorite clothes, cut her hair and put dark make-up and jewelry. She also learns to put up good nature with a reasonable amount of flirting from the other men.

*"I tried to feel part of them but couldn't. Learn to be like them outwardly. Dress like them, talk like them..... I even learned to put up good-naturedly with a moderate amount of flirting from the other men."*<sup>28</sup>

It's only after marriage, she comes to know that Nagendra had proposed and married her only because she was a doctor. He marries her not because he liked her but because it would be a thing of proud for him to possess doctor as his wife. He wishes to show her as a showpiece to his several friends. Therefore, she thinks as:

*"he would have thought it a matter of prestige if his wife was a practicing doctor."*<sup>29</sup>

When Vineeta understands it she begins to feel depressed. Simultaneously, the feeling of revolt begins to take shape in her mind. *"But inside I rebelled against it all"*<sup>30</sup> Vineeta feels resentful and deceived. She simply desires from her husband as much as she has given to him. She feels that she has given herself in entirely. She has sacrificed everything for Nagendra. In fact, Nagendra knows well that Vineeta has been nurturing rebellious thoughts in her mind but being calm man, he only ignores her and her feelings. He never tries to fight it out.

Vineeta is from Pune and Nagendra has feeling of dislike for Pune. Therefore, he passes insulting comments on Pune. She does not like Nagendra's this behavior. She gets angry with Nagendra whenever he passes insulting comments on Pune, her native place. His comments are Pune a city of pensioners, 'hodge podge' and also 'unproductive city'. He says that he does not like Pune's middle class mentality. Nagendra's comments on Pune irritate Vineeta. She has developed an attachment to Pune. He has bad viewpoint towards Pune. Perhaps he is trying to show his supremacy through his comments. Therefore, one insulting comment on her native place is sufficient for quarrel between husband and wife. There are usual fights between them.

*“So we had bitter fights. Or no, that's not an accurate description. It was I who fought, I who hurled accusations at him. He was comparatively calm because he was not really involved in the issue I fought over. Sometimes I wished he would shout or slam the door and walk out in anger, or even want to hurt me. But he never did. I was not a very important part of his life.”<sup>31</sup>*

In the course of time, the earlier quixotic feeling in their conjugal life begins to disappear due to everyday orderliness. Nagendra, who is very careful about Vineeta in the initial days of their marriage, begin to remain busy with his friends and business meetings and appointments. As a result, he is unable to give sufficient time to Vineeta. Eventually the incompatibility between husband and wife begins to come up at surface. Nagendra's habit is to manipulate relations for his benefit. Besides, his self-centered behavior makes it difficult for Vineeta to adjust in changed environment. For Vineeta, having come from middle class family, becomes difficult to adjust herself to Nagendra's rich upper class. As time passed, the class clash between Vineeta and Nagendra becomes severe. Vineeta seems to be misfit in her husband's society. Nagendra wish is that Vineeta should change herself to fit in to the pattern of his society. As quoted by Dr. Archana Rohokale in her Ph. D. thesis E. B. Hurlock's View that:

*“The more similar the backgrounds of husband and wife, the easier the adjustment.”<sup>32</sup>*

Vineeta is dependent on Nagendra in all respects. This very dependence forces her to accept the imposed life style of her husband's society. She does not approve of those things but she is helpless. In spite of her dislike, she changes herself because she ultimate wish is to please her husband. He is not satisfied with her. Perhaps some of his expectations are not rewarded. But Vineeta fails to understand his expectations and Nagendra's anger keeps on growing. As a result, he begins to spend most of his time out of the house. He begins to attend parties and to go for picnics and thereby entertain himself. On the other hand, Vineeta is sick of all this. Nagendra also likes to mix up with the people whereas Vineeta does not like because she always prefers an isolated life. It is clear that there is temperamental incompatibility as well as communication gap between them. Both of them are temperamentally opposite to each other. They fail to interact to each other meaningfully. There is no sharing of opinions and thoughts between husband and wife. Because of which they can never come together mentally.

On particular Sunday, being holiday Vineeta has dreamt to spend it with her husband. But on that Sunday, Nagendra goes to attend one of his friends marriage party. After the marriage party is over he goes on to visit his old parents at their home. In this way, he spends the whole day out of the house without giving any consideration to Vineeta's wishes. Vineeta doesn't like it. She is resented. She feels that Nagendra can have visited his parents some other day. It touches her heart and she feels it very bad. He comes back late at night. He plays with her body as usual and makes love to her as usual. After that within no time, he goes to sleep as if nothing is happened. Nagendra is so dominant that he never gives a chance to Vineeta to register her protest. He is also indifferent to her. When there is a fight previous night between them, he is not bothered to refer to that incident. Instead he is in pleasant mood the next morning.

*"The next morning he did not even refer to the incident the last word had been said about it, as far as he was concerned. He was cheerful and affectionate and I could only feel bruised and beaten."*<sup>33</sup>

The interruption between them creates frustration in their relationship. Nagendra's attitude and treatment to Vineeta shows that she is not a very significant part of his life. He pays attention to his parents but is careless to Vineeta. From his



behavior it is obvious that he has taken his wife for granted. In fact, it is unfortunate that being husband it is his prime duty to recognize his wife's feelings and expectations. He can never understand that she has to yearn for his company and for his touch. She wishes to be his parents instead of his wife. She feels that she could have been able to spend with him at least one day in a week that is Sunday. Her anxious need of him is reflected in her utterance.

Her condition is further worsened by Nagendra's sullenness for her. She is in a pathetic condition. Both of them have lost the enthusiasm of their relationship. No doubt, Vineeta tries to reach her in-laws expectations and her husband's feelings and passions but, unfortunately, she fails and becomes psychologically disheartened. It is also deepened by her obedience to the fleshly filth of her husband. On one hand, Nagendra fails to realize Vineeta's expectations and desires and on the other hand, Vineeta under the influence of his authoritative nature can never express her requirements. Vineeta readily represses her motherhood and submits to her husband's desire. She does not wish to offend Nagendra therefore she accepts the postponement of her motherhood.

Vineeta has to suffer because of temperamental incompatibility between her husband Nagendra and herself. It drifts them away from each other. Nagendra is arrogant. He has a feeling of supremacy. Vineeta is passive recipient. Besides she has a feeling of subordination and has negative approach. It is clear that both of them are incompatible by temperament. All these compatibilities cause to widen the gulf between them. There is communication gap as well between them. Therefore Nagendra does not share the news of his illness with her and unfortunately, the relation come to an end with Nagendra's untimely death. He dies with a severe heart attack. At the time of Nagendra's death, Vineeta was there and though she was a doctor, she could do nothing.

#### **2.2.4 Feminine sensibility**

The untimely death of Nagendra put a full stop to Vineeta's disillusioned life. She pondered over her past life. She instead of blaming others took all blames on herself for all the happening in her married life. In a typical manner, Vineeta considered herself to be responsible for the sudden turn of events. She now thinks

that perhaps Nagendra was attempting to adopt himself to a different way of life therefore he had married her. However, she felt that she was at fault. She failed to recognize her husband's intention. She did not cooperate with him. She felt that her negative approach became obstacle in his way of adopting different way of life.

*“Perhaps, when he chose to marry me he honestly was looking for a different way of life. Unfortunately, I adopted the negative attitude of resenting his way of life without offering him a substitute for it.....”<sup>34</sup>*

She thought that perhaps Nagendra was very weak man and he was looking for strength in her. Perhaps he had desired to make up it through her. She also felt that she was responsible for turning their marriage into a ‘difficult’ and ‘troubled’ one. She thought that she asked for more from Nagendra which he couldn't fulfill. And as she got less than she expected, she began to resent and fight with him.

*“Yes I felt I gave all of myself and in return I should have all of him. It was unfair, but then I did not have enough balance to see this. So we had bitter fights.”<sup>35</sup>*

She did not hesitate to accept that Nagendra was calm and unconcerned, therefore, the fight between them was one sided. Vineeta plainly confessed that she was responsible for fight. She accepted it in the following way:

*“It was I who fought... he was comparatively calm because he was not really involved in the issue I fought over... I was not a very important part of his life.”<sup>36</sup>*

Vineeta felt and admitted honestly that perhaps after marriage Nagendra wanted to change and start a new kind of life than his previous which was self-centered life. She also felt that her negative approach, attitude and reaction might have made difficult for him to change. She now felt sorry for not practicing as a doctor. She thought that if she had practiced she wouldn't have to depend on Nagendra. He would have permitted her to have her individuality.

But the unfortunate thing was that Vineeta realized what had gone wrong with their conjugal life only after the death of Nagendra and when it was of no use.

But the knowledge she got from her married life proved to be helpful for her to deal with men in her widowed life. She could deal with Vilas, Abhijit, her landlady, authorities of charity hospital and others successfully.

*“Anyway, its too late now for all this wisdom.”<sup>37</sup>*

Vineeta allowed Vilas to help her to start her OPD because she thought that a woman – be she a doctor or anyone else - would need to depend on the sure hands of a man to set up a business enterprise such as doctor’s practice. In fact she was determined that she would not accept any male superiority. However she did not hesitate to accept help from Vilas. Vineeta says:

*“I would have laughed if someone had made a barefaced statement that woman are inferior to men. Nevertheless, somewhere along the way, I must have swallowed the idea. I found it very comforting to entrust my life once again into a man’s hand.”<sup>38</sup>*

Though Vineeta took all the help from Vilas, she was sure from the very beginning that she would not have him as her husband. But Vilas worked according to his plan, ultimately hoping to marry her. Being a patient man, by nature, he was willing to wait for the suitable moment to make the proposal to her. Vineeta sometimes played up with the idea of Vilas as her husband and she thought he would be an easy and comfortable husband to live with, though not on equal terms. She thought it rather enduring, the way Vilas set a tray and made the coffee with appreciation and an economy of movement. For all his work he was not clumsy. But Vineeta feels:

*“There was a special intimacy in being alone with him in his flat at one in the morning, and I thought he would probably be a very easy man to live with.”<sup>39</sup>*

She knew it well that the ironical paradox of woman’s life is the married relationship which looks at woman in a peripheral position. The married relation is useless if the life partner does not relate with the desires and aspects of the wife. In Indian society, procreation and household duties are traditionally more important in the Indian marriage than the sexual satisfaction. Many historians agree that history

never regarded husband and wife to be equal. These may be the reasons that Vineeta had analyzed from the different married relations and finally feels that the marriage is a tricky game which gives woman a subordinate role. However, Vineeta accepts that she was looking at love only in her self-centered way.

### **2.2.5 Revolt against patriarchy and Social Norms**

Jai Nimbkar's female protagonists are very conscious of tradition and traditional values. They don't destroy the harmony of their conjugal life. Her women find out rather middle way to resolve their issues wisely. It doesn't mean that they are docile or feeble. They compromise respectfully but do not submit completely to the patriarchal norms. Her women remain within the boundaries and don't try to cross the boundaries of societal norms or conjugal ethics. Vineeta is the female protagonist of *Temporary Answers*. She faces her predicaments strongly as well as wisely and establishes her identity. She controls her feelings and takes care not to harm her relationship with others. The important thing is that Vineeta while trying to establish her individuality does not transgress other's territory. She is bold enough to choose Nagendra Sohani as her life partner. On one hand, she chose her partner but on the other hand she sought approval from her parents. It shows that she is modern but not ultra modern. She encounters various problems in her life but fights against it bravely.

Vineeta has hesitant approach towards every facet of life. She desires to break the shackles of the social taboos and customs about the widow. But she fears to break entirely away from social norms, customs and traditions. That is why she is in two minds as whether to marry Abhijit or not. Anyhow she very carefully justifies her womanhood in terms of the societal setting in the Indian perspective. She is neither subservient nor ultra modern or westernized. In one of her interview Jai Nimbkar says:

*"The total emotional independence is not really achievable in this sense, because then where would the need be for her to relate emotionally to another person? So, it is relative independence in the sense of release from total slavery."*<sup>40</sup>

Vineeta is partly traditional and partly modern. Therefore she never feels close to her sister Madhuri who breaks the social norms and elopes with a watchman. Moreover, both the sisters share a room still they do not share their feelings or secrets as other sisters do. Madhuri always places Vineeta in the same category as their mother who is supporter of tradition. Being widow, Vineeta has to face many problems. After the death of her husband, she is afraid of emotional dependence as a result she declines Vilas's proposal of marriage. Even when she involves with Abhijit, she is in two minds.

Her mother is strict and traditional minded. She wants her daughters to behave as per her wish. She dislikes Kishori, Vineeta's friend because she is a girl of bad reputation. However, Vineeta continues her friendship with Kishori. After Nagendra's death, her mother wants her to marry Vilas but Vineeta declines it. Her mother wants that she should not maintain relationship with Prof. Abhijit, she maintains it. Her mother wants that Vineeta should not be late in the evening but she cannot help for being late. Vineeta to avoid nagging of her mother decides to live separately in the same city and does it. In all these examples, it is her rebellious nature that asks her to go against her mother's wishes. It is her revolt against her mother. Her mother is the embodiment of patriarchy. Therefore, Vineeta's revolt against her mother in one sense can be seen as the revolt against traditional norms and customs because her mother supports and carries tradition and patriarchy.

### ***2.3 A Joint Venture***

#### **2.3.1 Image of Woman**

The female protagonist, Jyoti is an ordinary looking middle class girl. She is clever and has completed her graduation from commerce stream with distinction. Her parents hope that she will get married but she is not sure about it because of her ordinary looks. She is eligible for getting scholarship and wants to pursue higher education. At this juncture, she accidentally happens to meet Ram in one of the societal gatherings. Ram likes her and immediately after gathering approaches her parents and proposes Jyoti for marriage. Her parents who are very eager and are concerned about their daughter's marriage immediately agree. However, for Jyoti's mother it is like a dream. She simply cannot believe that a good looking boy from

high class society demands her daughter's hand. It is also unbelievable for her that he does not want dowry. After getting approval from Jyoti's parents for their marriage, Ram talks with Jyoti face to face and gets her consent also. In this way Jyoti's marriage is settled.

For Jyoti, Ram's accord to marry her and it is also without dowry is a matter of surprise. Being ordinary looking girl, she has never thought that young man like Ram who is good looking and educated would accept her as his wife. Therefore, she is very happy. Ram is better than her in every respect. She feels chosen. She is enthralled by his straightforward and autonomous decision. She feels herself to be privileged because she is going to marry a man who is superior to her in every way. Soon the marriage is performed in a simple way. After marriage, she goes to Shirgaon with her husband. She acquires a new outlook about her life. Ram has already talked with her about the probable difficulties of village life therefore she accepts all the inadequacies in her life at Shirgaon willingly. She has no complaint about anything. She is happy with her marital life. She establishes and maintains good relations with the members from Ram's family. She happily accepts everything and soon tries shape her life in the new role of married woman.

Jyoti is born and brought up in a patriarchal family setting. She is taught not to question husband but to follow him blindly. She is very eager to become a housewife but Ram has something different from her. He wants her to be a working woman and not a housewife. Ram has his seed processing business and he wants Jyoti to look after the audit department of his business. She accepts his proposal enthusiastically. She starts her new career as an accountant. Now, she gets an opportunity to use her knowledge of Accountancy in their business. There are twenty women workers who are working under her. She is respected by them. She enjoys her position. She is also happy for she gets relief from daily drudgery of cooking, washing and cleaning.

Jyoti, the female protagonist is a symbol of the distinctive woman who is traditional and modern too. The novel begins with the depiction of the frustration of Jyoti and her decision to leave Ram. As per the advice of Ram she goes to

Mahabaleshwar and ponders over her past but when she comes to know that Ram is vulnerable, she suddenly liquefies and feels protective for him. Here, she changes her role. It's our Indian culture that nobody can resist a woman when she feels her identity is threatened. On the contrary, she cannot face her husband's dignity hurt. Jyoti examines her husband quite analytically.

In fact she is thinking to leave Ram because both are incompatible with each other but she does not lose her regard and concern for him. It is her mother instinct which becomes dominant in her when she sees Ram vulnerable. So, finally Jyoti accepts her husband as he is but there is a change in him. His entire dominating ego is gone. He is now a weakling that needs motherly protection. So, now Jyoti's identity grows more powerful than that of wife. The novel ends with the realization of Jyoti's true identity as a powerful mother who is strong enough to protect the weak child. At the end, the symbol of 'Joint venture' stands for two things first as the description of their business and second as a symbol of their life together. Both the partners of a joint venture have to give an equal contribution, with mutual understanding and acceptance. Throughout the novel Jyoti plays her part and performs the duty as a wife very devotedly. But since a similar contribution from Ram hasn't been forthcoming their marriage comes almost to a break down. But Jyoti's good sense makes her to think on all sides of life and at last she finds the middle way out, without damaging the relationship with Ram.

A woman is as indispensable to a man's life as she performs these different roles as per need to support her husband at any cost. Jyoti does that entire Ram expects of her as wife but what does she get from him except a lost identity? She now realizes that life is not a logical progression of events, or may be, it is. But one cannot see it until too late, if sees it now then it cannot help her because she cannot change and control all the factors which are contributing to this chain of relation. Ram only develops his business and runs after earning money at the cost of his family. Jyoti allows Ram to take the lead in everything. Whenever someone gives her special respect then she always hesitates because she feels Ram would not like it. Ram's all decisions are pre-planned. As long as Jyoti accepts her husband, she feels secured. She also feels shared the age-old traditions. However these ancient traditions does not allow woman to live her own life. Therefore in the course of time

she comes to know that these traditions are useless and she is emptied of all her self-respect. She also feels that she is being embittered for thirty years. She also realizes that this venture of marriage between Ram and her for her is an imbalanced one. In it Ram plays with her emotions and she is being exploited by him.

The modern woman has now realized, she no more now a helpless and dependent like a cripple. It is the tradition that shakes her at once to rebel or to be selfish. The patriarchal system has been so much ingrained in the Indian culture that it makes woman of all classes, grades and groups to be subordinate to man. No doubt now-a-days the modern woman tries to redefine her own position but she cannot enjoy full happiness with her husband's defeat at any cost. That is the reason perhaps, that from ancient ages, woman is considered to be 'Mother'.

Jyoti is a well educated wife who helps in her husband's seed business and still does not receive the equal respect from her husband. She knows it very well that smooth relationship apparently existed in a delicate balance which can rupture at any time. Her husband refuses to treat her as an equal partner by taking all minor as well as major decisions in his own way. So, she starts on her quest for identity but does not dare to reject male-domination. She can think for her own identity as she being an educated woman is able enough to do that. She feels that after thirty years of relation her husband should understand her mental state. Therefore, she gives a break to her relation with Ram. She is intelligent she knows the truth of love that 'it is different thing at different times even for the same person'. Perhaps after the extensive sacrifice of her life she now realizes that it was her mistake that she does not have exerted a more decisive influence on Ram's life, it's her fault that she accepted all Ram's decisions as a silent receiver. But at the end she realizes that when husband is in his vulnerable condition then there is no question of loyalty, then wife has to perform her reversal role as protector; that needs a motherly protection. Jyoti's submission is a way to follow him as a meek, ineffective protester and passive recipient of every decision. In fact, underneath a big storm of violence was under the process of germination.



### 2.3.2 Jyoti's Quest for Self-Identity

Jyoti, the female protagonist, after thirty years of marital life realizes that she has got nothing in return and that she is nobody without her husband and children. She is the wife of Ram. He is in the seed business. At the very beginning of the novel, Jyoti expresses her desire to her husband, Ram to leave him and live separately. It doesn't mean that Ram doesn't love her; in fact he loves her but in his own way. The couple has two children and is economically sound. Therefore, it is really difficult to understand as to why she has reached at this decision. The couple has been married for last thirty years and now at this juncture Jyoti feels that she has not lived her own life at all during all that period. She has been living only for Ram and not for her. However, Ram fails to understand why Jyoti has taken this decision and therefore it tremors him. He directs her not to take any decision in a panic. He advises her to go to Mahabaleshwar and to rethink on her decision. Jyoti accepts and goes to Mahabaleshwar. At Mahabaleshwar, she ponders over her marital life and comes to realize that in the course of time unknowingly her whole life gradually became a part of Ram's life. As a result, she never had any identity of her own..

Jyoti is born in a middle class family. Therefore, her story is the story of a typical Indian girl from a middle-class family. She is a very intelligent student. She passes her B. Com. with distinction and tops the list in her college. However, being relatively ordinary in looks she fails to attract the attention of boys during her college days. However, the girls who are not as intelligent as Jyoti but superior in looks than Jyoti are able to draw the attention of the college boys. Jyoti's aptitude is treated as something immaterial because she is an ordinary girl in her looks.

In Indian society, the educational and other achievements of girls are given less importance as compared to physical beauty. Physical beauty of a girl is more valued. In this society, it is really difficult for mediocre and simple looking girls like Jyoti to get married and have good looking husband. Therefore, Jyoti is not surprised at all when the dozen of eligible male have denied to marry her. Because of these denials, she had made her mind that she perhaps might never get married.

*"This had not greatly surprised her. Even though she had grown up accepting marriage as the natural and necessary state for everyone,*

*experience had made her face the possibility that she might never get married.*”<sup>41</sup>

On this background, when Jyoti receives Ram’s offer of marriage she immediately accepts it. She does it very practically. She knows that she is already rejected by dozen bachelors whose concern perhaps was her ordinary looks. Moreover, her parents are not in a position to offer huge dowry. It is also one of the obstacles in her marriage. Her fear is that if somebody becomes ready to marry her, he will demand a huge dowry. And her parents being poor will not afford to fulfill it. Ram is very plain and straightforward while proposing Jyoti.

During their meeting, Ram explains Jyoti the type of life she would have after marriage. He also asks her about her expectations from him. But Jyoti is compelled to accept everything submissively. She doesn’t dare to ask Ram about what he may expect from her. She replies Ram’s questions in the way a woman is projected to reply and not in the way she would have liked to. In spite of Ram’s insistence, Jyoti does not ask him even a single question in return. She is bound by the societal attitudes and financial limitations therefore she has developed negative approach in her mind.

Jyoti has some ideas deeply rooted in her mind. She thinks of herself as a drab, ugly and unattractive woman. Therefore, she is ready to accept her fate without any grudge. Besides, we can say that she has developed an inferiority complex in her mind. Her impression is that what she is receiving from life is not less than a miracle. It is more than she could expect.

*“She had thought of herself as a drab, ugly, totally unattractive woman, and had, as a result, expected so little from life that what she received never stopped seeming like a miracle.”*<sup>42</sup>

After marriage, Jyoti feels that she must mould herself to fit in to the pattern of the Ram’s family. Therefore, she observes and tries to know the traditions of her in-laws family. She also tries to know the expectations of members of the family from her. She does it very carefully. Because she doesn’t want to hurt any member of the family and also feels scared that Ram’s family may be dissatisfied with her. She thinks that the essence of marriage is the negation of a woman’s life and

accepting the situation whatever it is, is the duty of a woman. For her, marriage is a fresh beginning of life for woman. She feels that after marriage a woman has to adjust herself to the new people, new ideas and values and a new life style. She thinks it to be natural and therefore accepts it without any resentment but rather with pride and pleasure. She echoes:

*“That was the essence of marriage, the negation of a woman’s life up to that point, and a fresh start made with new people, new ideas and values, a new style of life. This was all in the natural order of things, and Jyoti accepted it without resentment, with pleasure and pride, in fact.”<sup>43</sup>*

Jyoti in trying to adjust her to the pattern of in-laws family and accepting new way of life is in fact obliterating her ‘self’. But she does not understand this because she is taught in that way by her parents. Besides, the tricks for woman subjugation set by the male-controlled society are very indirect. They become so easily a part of woman’s everyday life that nonconformity to this custom and proclamation of the ‘self’ seems to be odd. And therefore she very eagerly accepts the life that Ram and his family members would admire. After marriage, in a very short span, Jyoti adjusts herself to her new role as well as to the family of in-laws. She gets adjusted so easily to everything there as if she is born for that. Here in Shirgaon, the surrounding and nature is so beautiful that she begins to hate her parents’ small two-room apartment, the continuous traffic, its noise, the small backbiting in the house and her father’s continued illness. She remembers all these but with aversion. She is happy here in her husband’s house and becomes entirely integrated.

*“She had become totally assimilated into her surroundings in a very short time, and it seemed right to her that this should happen.”<sup>44</sup>*

She is totally assimilated with her surroundings and she loves it as well as Ram. Consequently, when Ram with a sense of guiltiness exposes his secret that he is not an agricultural graduate, she only laughs it away. She considers it as an unpremeditated revelation. For her, it is not something awful. Ram also tries to defend his failure by giving reasons for the state of affairs which made it tough for him to take the examination. But for Jyoti it seems to be insignificant at this point. It

never occurs to her mind that now Ram is aware of his incompetence to get a degree only because his wife is a graduate. Traditionally, it is not approved that a husband has less education than a wife. Therefore, being a man Ram finds it difficult to accept this lesser position than his wife. He also feels it necessary to defend his disappointment. When Ram relates the whole story, Jyoti feels relieved and she laughs. Her response to it is very casual one. :

*“She said, ‘is that all?’*

*‘What do you mean, is that all?’ he said, a little offended that his dramatic disclosure meant so little to her. What did you think I was going to confess?*

*Something awful.”<sup>45</sup>*

Jyoti wants to be in her husband’s errand therefore her chief concern is not Ram’s disappointment but her desire to be in his errand. She doesn’t want to lose Ram because she thinks it to be the highest disaster for her. She, therefore, constantly tries to mold herself as per Ram’s outlooks, his preferences. Ram is very conscious about the status and position of his family in the society. He always used to advise Jyoti to be cautious about it. Once, accidentally she goes out in an untidy sari, Ram feels very insulted. Therefore, he cautions her to be mindful of their status in the society.

Right from the marriage with Ram, she has been doing the things asked by Ram. In the beginning, she works as a supervisor and when the business prospers, she works as an accountant and looks after accounts of the business. Even though she doesn’t want to come to Pune, she comes when the office is shifted to Pune. It is very clear that she has been doing everything possible to please Ram though she herself does not like them. Though she feels it to be illogical to take salary she accepts it to outsmart the income tax officer and because of Ram’s request. When Jyoti ponders over all this, she remembers:

*“Almost literally, she had merely done what Ram wished her to do.”<sup>46</sup>*

Ram takes every decision without consulting his wife, Jyoti. He feels no necessity of it. Ram is supposed to take decisions and Jyoti to implement them. She

is never consulted in any matter by Ram. When Jyoti delivers, it is Ram who decides when she should start working. He hires a maid-servant to look after the child it is also without consulting Jyoti. She does not like it and wants to complain. She doesn't want to be away from her child but Ram has asked her to join the work. She feels that her right to be with her child all the time is being snatched. However, Ram being practical pays no attention to Jyoti's state of mind and her likes and dislikes. Jyoti has no other way than to succumb quietly to Ram's decision. She validates her obedience to herself. She says to herself that she would have decided to work anyhow and therefore she has no right to complain.

*“.....she felt that he had decided everything ahead of time, even the hiring of a servant, without asking her what she wanted to do. Be sensible, she told herself. You have been pushed into a decision you would have taken anyhow so what have you got to complain about?”<sup>47</sup>*

Ram is very self-interested and greedy type of man. He has his own plans and schemes. He doesn't allow anyone to interfere in his scheme, not even to his children. The couple used to spend their week-end at Mahabaleshwar. But thinking children to be troublesome, Ram, in spite of Jyoti's strong desire to take children with them to Mahabaleshwar, never allows Jyoti to do so. Jyoti often has to subdue her desire and leave the children at home. Smita, her daughter is well aware that her mother is incapable to proclaim herself. One day, Smita goes to a party given by Krishnakaka, a correspondent. Ram does not like it. In fact, Jyoti knows that Ram has been partial to Krishna, but she doesn't have that the audacity to express her opinion. And, therefore, Smita briskly tells her mother that she should learn to express her feelings and opinions. She must learn to tell Ram that she does not like this or that. Smita tells Jyoti that she is wrong to follow Ram's wishes thoughtlessly.

Jyoti is fed up with the life at Pune. There is nothing new in life, only attending parties and giving parties to others. She is bored with it. She doesn't have fascination for the parties because the members who attend the parties have similar discussion, untruthful worry and insincerity. But Ram ignores her and her views. Therefore, she begins to feel to be an outsider in Ram's house. She does not feel the attachment for it. Hence, she makes her mind to leave Ram and try to live her own

life. However, at the same time, she is doubtful whether she would be able to live on her own. Because till date, she has been living only Ram's life. She has respected his tastes, likes, dislikes and preferences. She has considered his likes and dislikes to be her likes and dislikes. Therefore she is not sure about living separately.

*“And now she was going to leave it, and of course leave the other house too. She was the outsider who had come in, so she would be the one to go out, if she so chose. This was Ram's house, Ram's life. She had only been a participant in it.”*<sup>48</sup>

On the whole, Ram belongs to male dominated family system. Therefore, he strongly believes that the husband's duty is to provide security and shower all the comforts of life on wife. He also believes that wife requires nothing more than that. He does not value the thoughts and feeling of Jyoti. Moreover, he never feels the necessity of it. According to him, comforts of life means a nice house, nice clothes, good food and sporadic trips. But that is not all in life for woman. She needs more than that. Along with these physical comforts, she requires emotional fulfillment. He never thought of satisfaction of mental, emotional requirements of Jyoti. Even when Jyoti expresses her desire to leave him, he thinks that she must be exhausted. She requires a rest, therefore, he suggests her to go to Mahabaleshwar. He feels that rest for some days at Mahabaleshwar will do her good. She will be refreshed.

As per his suggestion, Jyoti comes to Mahabaleshwar and after spending some time there she has some new understandings and experiences. During her stay at Mahabaleshwar, she ponders over her life in the past and realizes that she has made her life a vital part of Ram's life. Then, her quest for self-identity begins. She now realizes that her whole life is centered on and around Ram. While brooding over her past life, she also comes to know that whatever she remembers of her life is in this or that way, related to Ram and Ram's life. It is as if all her memories of her life at her parents' house have been obliterated from her memory. Therefore, she decides to prove that her life before marriage was also meaningful and happy.

*“She thought, everything my mind runs on is an experience shared with Ram. It is almost as though my life before he entered it was barren, without significance. My mind never dwells on that period at all. Does it mean that I*

*will subject myself to living in a desert if I banish him from my life? No, that simply can't be true. I must prove that it isn't true by finding a viable alternative. I had led a meaningful and happy life before I met him and I can after I leave him.”*<sup>49</sup>

Before marriage, in financial matters she had to depend on her parents and after marriage she has to depend on her husband. In fact, the social structure in India is so in which the woman is vanquished to depend on male members of the family. As a result, woman cannot exert her choice in any matter. In patriarchal system, husband is everything for a married woman. The forfeiture of husband means the forfeiture of every other thing. This acts as a barrier in woman's starting a fresh life. In comparison with woman, man enjoys more protected place in society.

*“The man, the place, the job were all part of a package which she had been given when she married. She could either keep them all or lose them all. And she had this problem basically because she was a woman.”*<sup>50</sup>

During her stay at Mahabaleshwar, Jyoti meets a man whose name is Aditya Rege. He invites her for dinner. They take dinner together and while taking leave, he touches her naked back. He may have thought that a clash between Jyoti and her husband has compelled her to come to Mahabaleshwar unaccompanied. He perhaps thought that she would be amenable to his proposal, however, Jyoti is stunned. It is the common and established belief in the society and in the people like Rege that a lone woman must be susceptible. Therefore, Jyoti doubts that she would not be able to relish her autonomy in an appropriate way.

In male dominated family system, woman is supposed to be capable of only household duties. However, it is the fact that Jyoti's contribution to the progress of Ram's seed company is substantial one and Ram is aware of it. Therefore, he openly accepts it. But others do not praise her for this as they consider it to be unbelievable. Nobody takes her contribution seriously except Ram. Therefore, Jyoti doesn't want to blame Ram only for her subordinate position. She feels that she herself has equal share in it. She feels that she has allowed Ram to become overriding. She has remained inert and behaved submissively right from the beginning. She also thinks

that she should have lead a life knowingly and intentionally and not watching passively what is happening.

*“If any blame was to be apportioned, she deserved an equal share of it, because she had allowed Ram to take the lead in everything. In fact she had not consciously allowed it, she had simply accepted it as the natural way. Perhaps that was the crux. Life should be led with conscious intention, not simply allowed to happen.”*<sup>51</sup>

While talking with Vinnie, her friend, Jyoti tries to define love. She thinks that love means being subtle to the emotional state and wants of the person adored. Vinnie is of the view that the woman must define her wants. Otherwise, the egocentric man is probable to be unmindful to woman’s wants. But Jyoti thinks in different way and feels that it is not necessary to define her needs. She feels that she has spent so many years with him therefore he should be aware of and try to fulfill her needs. She also feels that if he fails to do that then it is clear that he doesn’t love you or care about you.

During the conversation, Vinnie advises Jyoti that before leaving Ram she should have talked to him. However, Jyoti feels that it is too late now. She feels during the course of her life she has played the role of an inert receiver. There is a lack of communication between Jyoti and Ram therefore she could never express herself or share her thoughts to Ram. He is so indifferent to the problems and needs of Jyoti that when she expresses her desire to leave him, he merely asks her whether he beats her or starves her or mistreats her. He fails to understand Jyoti’s emotional needs.

Then Jyoti receives the news that Ram is in difficulty. She immediately starts for Pune. When she reaches home, Ram is in the bathroom. When he comes out after his bath, Jyoti tells him that his fly is unfastened. He feels ashamed and susceptible. At that moment, Jyoti all of a sudden feels defensive towards him. She realizes that she had never experienced this particular feeling for Ram before. Ram also after much thought has realized that the things which he valued up to now were not so important. He has realized that it Jyoti’s happiness that is very important. It is more important than his business, his position, financial matters and every other thing.



Therefore, he promises her that he would do everything for her happiness and comfort. Jyoti also feels that the understanding between the two of them is important. Hence, her final decision is the outcome of her mellowness. It is clear that the question of self or identity is not so important in man-woman relationship. If it is considered important, then relationships would not last long. If husband and wife have to continue to live together, both needs to scarify own selves and adjust herself or himself to other partner. They should raise them beyond their personal selves. Then and then only human relationship particularly husband wife relationship would survive.

### **2.3.3 Husband-wife relationship**

Ram and Jyoti is the example of mismatched couple and incompatible pair. Jyoti is a strong built, dark, ordinary looking girl. She is perhaps the girl with rare chance of getting married. Her ordinary looks developed negative feelings in her mind. She thinks that she will not be able to get married. Moreover, her family is financially poor and hence not in a position to offer a huge dowry in her marriage. On the contrary, Ram is good-looking, learned, a young businessman and a landlord. He is superior to her in every respect, a step ahead than her.

The wedding normally takes place between two families having identical position. But Jyoti's and Ram's family are not equal in any sense. Jyoti's family is poor whereas Ram's family is rich. Ram comes from higher middle class whereas Jyoti comes from lower middle class. Therefore, Jyoti thinks that it is Ram's courtesy to marry him. She feels honored at the time of marriage with Ram. Owing to her thoughts, she develops an inferiority complex in her. Therefore, when proposed by Ram she happily says 'yes'. She not only marries happily to him and but also tries to live adjusting her life to the demands of her husband and her in-laws. For next thirty years, Jyoti tries to live her life as per the Ram's wish. Ram was also a very good husband, at least on the surface. He tries to make her happy in his own way. So, Jyoti merges her life to Ram's life. For thirty years she does not get time to think about her own life and her identity. She feels:

*“That was the essence of marriage, the negation of a woman's life up to that point, and a fresh start made with new people, new ideas and values, a new*

*style of life. This was all in the natural order of things, and Jyoti accepted it without resentment, with pleasure and pride, in fact.*"<sup>52</sup>

Thus, she makes Ram's life her own and tries to live it as he wished it. But the main thing about Ram is that he is a businessman, first and foremost. For Ram, every other thing than his business is secondary. His family, his friends, his employees and even his own everything is secondary to him.

He is not even graduate degree holder like Jyoti and in fact he is not interested in it and never bothers to complete it. Though not educationally well qualified he knows all the ins and outs of his business. He manages his business very well achieves success in it and becomes the successful businessman. He is so cunning that he adapts himself very easily to new life-style. He adapts to the change effortlessly. Jyoti enjoys it and feels very happy and very satisfied. She thinks Ram to be lucky.

*"He had adopted himself so well to his new life-style that he has forgotten he ever followed any other. It was always so. He had always taken in stride every change in his life, effortlessly leaving behind the place he had occupied earlier. Long ago he must have looked ahead and seen himself where he is now, and so had climbed without surprise or fuss every step which led him there."*<sup>53</sup>

The important trait of Ram is that he is a businessman in and out. He lives for his business and he makes his associates also live their lives for the success of his business. He possesses unquenchable business ambition and it creates an acute inner conflict in Jyoti. It is because Jyoti's priorities are different from her husband. Therefore, the initial days of their marriage are happy. Jyoti had started her married life sincerely. She had thought that she would be happy throughout her married life. She had expected that she would be treated by her husband with parity and would be given equal status. However, Ram changes in the course of time and begins to dictate Jyoti. She does not like it and therefore she begins to suffer, feel suppressed and hence restless. In fact, she was disillusioned. One of the scholars, Borate T. S., in his article "Jai Nimbkar's A Joint Venture: A Study in- feminine –Feminist-female Consciousness", writes:

*“A Joint Venture shows a woman’s world when she enters into marriage, she hopes for an equal relationship but, she gets only the illusion of wholeness in which she stands alone, complete in herself.”<sup>54</sup>*

Their thoughts about their employees are also contradictory to each other. In fact, Ram is a self-centered. He always thinks of his business and nothing else. He is very ambitious. At the time of marriage, she felt that he was marrying her because he was good natured and he really loved her. But now she understands that it was actually his corporate intellect. His bigheartedness to her was just a strategy to get her unhesitating support in his corporate undertaking. He was not a graduate therefore he wanted to use Jyoti’s education and her talent for the development of his business. He had envisaged that she would be able to look after accounting and office administration of his business. However, Jyoti was unaware of all this at the time of marriage. Therefore, after marriage, she allows him to dominate her. She blindly obeys him and continues to do everything that he expects from her. After she begins to work in the office, she maintains good relationships with the workers in the company. However, Ram does not like it and hence he always directs her to behave as boss with the employees and treat them as subordinates. He also expects that she should not be friendly with the workers.

*“You must never fraternize with them; they mustn’t feel that you are one of them. They must always know you are boss. You can’t run a business any other way.”<sup>55</sup>*

He himself behaves strictly with the employees. He maintains distance between him and his employees that is required between boss and his subordinates. He also expects the same from Jyoti. He expects her to be a good master that’s why he advises her to have communication with those workers who work for the company and for her. Here lies the difference of opinion between wife and husband. Jyoti wants to be friendly with workers and Ram wants her to maintain distance between the workers and her. No doubt that he is a good businessman. But he is complete businessman in and out. Therefore he does not have any affectionate feeling for his workers.

Ram has got a typical businessman mentality. He looks at everything, at everybody and every aspect of life from business point of view. For him, even his family members are a part of his business venture. He provides every luxury and every facility to his wife and children. However, he is not sensitized to their human needs like mental, emotional and psychological needs. He never shares his feelings or problems with them. Therefore it is clear that there is a communication gap between husband and wife and father and children.

Jyoti is born and brought up in a patriarchal family environment. From the childhood, she is taught the conventional modes of society in which wife must follow her husband blindly. She tries her level best to become a housewife and succeeded but Ram has different plan in his mind. He expects Jyoti to become a working woman rather than a housewife. Jyoti is asked to look after the audit department of his seed processing business. Having traditional mentality, she is surprised as well as delighted that her husband asks her to free herself from the square of domestic affairs. She surrenders to Ram rather enthusiastically and Ram succeeds in his business strategy. He recognizes the educational ability of Jyoti and decides to manipulate that ability. He thinks that Jyoti will be the perfect accountant for his business. Ram as a strong willed person achieves success in his business to a great extent. He adopts himself so well to his new life style. But Jyoti realizes that he is moving apart from her.

Ram has authoritative nature. Because of his commanding and influential nature, Jyoti gets frustrated and has to take decision of separating from Ram. He never feels the necessity to take advice of his better half. She is never consulted by him even while taking important decisions. He takes all decisions himself. He takes loan from the bank, renovates their bedroom, hires a maid for household work and even finalizes name for their child without consulting his wife, Jyoti. He always takes her for granted. At that time, he does not think about her father and relatives. No doubt, he is doing all these things for Jyoti's happiness but he never understands that along with physical comfort, the fulfillment of mental or spiritual comfort is also of equal importance. He never leaves any space for Jyoti. He does not ask Jyoti whether she will like to work in his seed processing unit or not. Instead of asking her he orders her to work. Whatever decision he takes it is final and it is never changed.

It annoys Jyoti. She feels that her identity as a woman and wife is in danger. She also feels that Ram is not giving due respect to her as a woman and wife.

Ram is a secluded man. He does not like to have friends. Moreover, he is not that much closely related and does not have that much rapport with other members of the family. While taking decisions it is his habit to take them independently and not to discuss with anybody. He never feels the necessity of it. Jyoti compromises with all this for nearly thirty years and then she feels that she has been living Ram's way of life and not her own. She is hurt a lot. She keeps on compromising, submitting herself every time but unfortunately she does not get the same understanding from her counterpart. In the course of time Ram changed his behavior. For him money is everything. He feels that if you give some money that is all the help you are required to do. Earning money and getting more and more success is the aim of his life. He thinks one must change himself with success. He says:

*“Working hard and denying yourself is one part of a success story. The other part, when success comes, knowing how to accept it and live up to it. If you continue your pre success mentality and life style there's no point in achieving success.”*<sup>56</sup>

He devotes his time and energy to expand his business and forgets his other duties and responsibilities. Ram's demand of increasing devotion from Jyoti towards business caused conflicts between them. Now she is Ram's wife as well the mother of her children and hence she wants to fulfill her duties and responsibilities towards her children. Therefore, when Ram asks her to join her work, she felt that his decisions restrict her freedom of choice. Now, she is in need of something beyond his financial and physical protection. Jyoti complains that she has to do only those things that are expected by Ram. However, she accepts that she got all the luxuries of life in her husband's house. Her parents being poor cannot provide her those luxuries. Ram also asks Jyoti whether she is happy or not but it is superficial one.

*“Are you happy Jyoti.... If you do miss your family and friends, I hope you'll feel free to invite them to spend some times with you.”*<sup>57</sup>

But he is so fully involved in his business that he forgets his duties and responsibilities towards his wife and children. He is not ready to look back as he is getting more and more success in his business. Ram forgets his past but Jyoti cannot forget their beginnings, the real position from where they had started their journey of life. Ram's behavior compels Jyoti to define love and to think over the actual meaning of love for Ram.

*“What is love? Is it something you feel for someone who depends on you, or someone you are dependent on or someone who does your bidding? Should not someone who loves you be sensitive to your feelings, your needs?”<sup>58</sup>*

Ram is an archetypal Indian male companion to Jyoti and therefore he thinks that his responsibility is to provide all easements to his family. As the head of the family he fulfills his responsibility very carefully. However, he is very egoistic and self-interested in his philosophy of life. He imagines that his wife and his children must be contented and thankful to him. He is so self-centered and is very cautious about his position in the society. Because of his meticulous planning and following it strictly, he gets success in his business. However success turns him to be self-centered and feelingless. One day, Jyoti happens to wear a shabby sari. Ram does not like it and he tells so to Jyoti. He does not like his wife's wearing shabby sari not because she is his wife but because people would see her. It seems that he is not concerned for Jyoti but for his image in the society. He says:

*“If someone saw you dressed like that they would think our business had failed or something. I mean, you are not just nobody.”<sup>59</sup>*

Gradually, adamant nature of Ram increases. Ram finalizes the name for their child without taking into account the opinion of Jyoti. It is 'Pratap'. He thinks the child would be brave, charming and courageous. He thinks himself as the commander who rules over the family or as one who makes laws for everybody. He becomes an insensitive person, who does not have sensitivity of feelings of love and other emotions.

Ram enjoys the unilateral power and thus develops superiority complex in him. Jyoti wants their children to learn in their village school but Ram sends them to a boarding school at Panchagani. He does not pay attention to Jyoti's wish. Being

mother Jyoti longs to meet her children. She wished to spend some time in the company of children. Whenever children come to Shirgaon, Ram takes holiday and goes to Mahabaleshwar with Jyoti. She suffers from guilty feeling for not giving required time to their children. Jyoti feels to be deprived of her motherhood. In fact Ram considers her to be his employee and not his wife. But Jyoti herself is responsible for this nature of Ram. Jyoti from the beginning allowed him to establish his authority. She never complains and expresses her views. He continues to impose his decisions on her and she without any grudge continues to surrender and execute his decisions.

#### **2.3.4 Feminine sensibility:**

Jyoti after thirty years of married life takes a decision to leave Ram. After that long period, she feels that she is being neglected and treated as subordinate and thus cheated by her husband, Ram. However, she doesn't blame Ram only for her subordinate or secondary position in their joint venture. She feels that she herself is equally responsible for it. Because she feels that she has allowed Ram to become overriding by remaining passive and behaving submissively from the beginning. She also thinks that a woman should lead a life consciously and intentionally and not watching passively what is happening.

*“If any blame was to be apportioned, she deserved an equal share of it, because she had allowed Ram to take the lead in everything. In fact she had not consciously allowed it, she had simply accepted it as the natural way. Perhaps that was the crux. Life should be led with conscious intention, not simply allowed to happen.”<sup>60</sup>*

The role of wife, daughter-in-law and mother are very significant for Indian woman. Jyoti plays these roles perfectly and effectively. She suffers when Ram sends his children to a boarding school at Panchagani. She longs for her children's love and company. She wanted to educate them in their village. But Ram ignores her and her motherly feeling and sends the children to Panchagani. The most tragic thing from Jyoti's point of view is that when children come to Shirgaon, Ram takes holiday and goes to Mahabaleshwar with Jyoti. Jyoti wishes to be with her children. Jyoti felt guilty for not giving the required time to their children. In other words, he

deprives her of her motherhood. He looks at Jyoti as his employee, not as a wife. He is completely unaware of her feelings as an individual, as a wife and family member.

Jyoti recognizes that she cannot make autonomous 'social image' in a society where women are treated as secondary by male members of the society. In 1960s and 1970s, working woman had her own position as a supplementary source of income to the family. However male member is believed as the centre of success and not female member. She gets substandard treatment in parties where Ram is considered and focused as a successful businessperson by everybody there in the party. Though she has an equal contribution in Ram's success as businessman, still she is ignored. Her presence in the party is ignored. Even Ram can never understand the value of Jyoti's work as an accountant. Moreover he presented her knowledge as his knowledge. He even used to belittle Jyoti by saying that reading is not his job. It is Jyoti's. It implies that reading is an activity of an empty mind. There is always a conflict between the two over this. Therefore she thinks of parting from Ram. She feels that she is left with only one way that is to throw off the fetters of marriage. She makes her mind and shares her decision with her husband. Ram feels shocked and is unable to understand as to why she has taken such decision. Hence he only advises her to go to Mahabaleshwar and to contemplate before taking any final decision.

She goes to Mahabaleshwar and ponders over her relationship with Ram but cannot take the final decision of separation. She is concerned about the reaction of society. Their couple is the ideal couple for everyone in the society. She thinks of her mother, relatives, friends and the people in the society. She is anxious about all. It is because she is closely connected with them. She also feels that she will not be able to live a separate life. In the first place she is not independent. Secondly, she lacks maternal support. Thirdly, she is well aware that divorce woman in Indian society is looked down upon by the society. Fourthly, it will be difficult for her to find a suitable job after divorce. Sixthly, she will not go to her children because they have already broken off from them.

She explores into her past and realizes some good qualities of Ram. He is a caring husband. He always thinks about her comforts though he forgets to ask her



about it. He always wishes to make her happy. She examines him objectively. He has influenced thirty years of her life. Therefore, she understands that

*“Love is not only one criterion of a relationship. It is mutual dependence, regard and concern which binds people in a relation.”*<sup>61</sup>

She guesses from her interpretations that people can and do live with each other without love. They live together even when they hate each other. She wants happiness but her problem is that she is not able to define ‘happiness’. Concept of happiness is very complex one and changes from situation to situation in Jyoti’s life. Jyoti realizes that what is appropriate in one situation may be inappropriate in another. She cannot decide the rightness of her decision of leaving Ram. For her Ram is everything in her life. Her life is fused with him so much, therefore, she can never dream of living separately. She feels that ‘husband’ is not less than God.

Vinaya, Jyoti’s friend when indirectly awakens Jyoti’s self-consciousness; she believes that Ram has made her life a paradise. She holds herself responsible for the crisis, because she has never expressed her expectations, opinions and views to Ram. Ram takes her silence as her acceptance. Vinaya asks Jyoti:

*“Jo, have you talked to Ram? Have you said to him all the things you have said to me? I think you have gone on brooding and blown things up until it has assumed enormous proportions. Talk it over with Ram. He is not like Atul. He not only loves you, he also respects you. He will listen carefully to what you say.”*<sup>62</sup>

She admits that if she has talked to Ram, things might not have come to that point. She cannot blame Ram because she herself has accepted the role of a timid follower, unsuccessful activist and submissive receiver. She also realizes the intensity of her love for Ram after she leaves him. It is evident in her immediate decision to go back home when Triveni seeds and Ram are in trouble. She wants to stand by Ram in crisis. She tells Vinaya:

*“If there really is some sort of crisis, I’ll stick with Ram long enough to see him through it.”*<sup>63</sup>

Her sudden lift of spirit, her trust in Ram forces her to take a bus and come back home immediately. She does not want him to fight a lonely fight. She is with him from the beginning, in growth, in development and in success.

The dilemma does not come to an end. She observes that everything at home is at its place as usual. She misses home but the home does not miss her. She sees the house does not look like a deplorable place bereaved of a woman's touch. The presence of papayas in the refrigerator demonstrates that Ram can get on very well without her. It is only her illusion that Ram may be disturbed and uncomfortable without her. This makes her to rethink her place in the family.

She is confused about her own vibrating emotions. She is in search of happiness and her happiness is Ram. Their marital relation shows a sign of positive improvement with Ram's introspection. He tries to find out his own mistakes. He also thinks about Jyoti's sudden decision to leave him. It makes him aware that planning is not something one can do in a human relationship. He realizes that her decision is not arbitrary. He also realizes that it is not merely love and loyalty; it is certain reversal of roles, which are revealed in his confession that,

*"My life was one dimensional before you became part of it. Everything worthwhile that has happened to me is bound up with you. I am sorry that it's all been one way".*<sup>64</sup>

He recognizes the sacrifices she has made in their life. Success in business is not possible for him without her. He pledges not to lose her at any cost. He promises her to return to Shirgaon. She tries to read into his eyes. She knows that he is not a devious man. She realizes *"happiness of the partner was the ultimate equation between the two of them."*<sup>65</sup> Whatever they have done is centered to make the partner happy. Finally, she tells Ram, *"Yes Ram, I have come back."*<sup>66</sup>

Jyoti is impressed with his straight forward manners, ambitious nature and decisive power. She accepts secondary role in her family and business. Ram and Jyoti jointly venture in agricultural seed processing business. She chooses to be secondary because her aim is the happiness of her husband and children.

However, in the course of time, Ram changes his behavior. He imposes his decisions upon her and she follows them silently. His expectations from her grow. She loses her identity and becomes a symbol of his status. Their children part from them. She becomes lonely and isolated in the urban environment of Pune. At fifty she wants to part from her husband. But it is a difficult situation for her to take final decision.

When she parts from her husband, she realizes his love for her. She realizes that her submissiveness and devotion has given him chances to take her for granted and ride the situation. Ram accepts his mistake and Jyoti finally decides not to leave him.

### **2.3.5 Revolt against patriarchy and Social Norms**

Jyoti is a symbol of the typical Indian woman who is traditional as well as modern too. At the very beginning of the novel Jyoti's frustration and her decision to leave Ram is declared. At the end, when she comes to know about Ram's susceptibility, she immediately changes her mind and comes back to Ram to protect him. Because, she cannot face her husband's dignity hurt. Jyoti examines her husband quite dispassionately. In fact, she is thinking to leave Ram because both are incompatible with each other but she does not lose her regard and concern for him. It is her mother instinct which becomes dominant in her when she sees Ram vulnerable. So, finally Jyoti accepts her husband as he is but there is a change in him. His entire dominating ego is gone. He is now a weakling that needs motherly protection. So, now Jyoti's identity grows more potent than that of wife. The novel ends with the realization of Jyoti's true identity as a powerful mother who is strong enough to protect the weak child. This the distinguishing features of this novel which makes it different from other two.

The title of the novel *A Joint Venture* is symbolic. It symbolizes their business as well as their life together. It suggests that both the partners of a joint venture need to give an equal contribution, with reciprocity, mutual understanding and acceptance. Jyoti carries out her responsibilities and duties as a wife, as a mother and also as a worker very faithfully. On the contrary, Ram fails to contribute in the same manner as Jyoti. Therefore, their marriage is about to collapse. However,

it is Jyoti whose good sense makes her to reflect on all sides of life and finally she finds the middle way out and saves their relationship from ruin.

*“True, she felt as though, after examining uncharted territory, she was returning, with regret and relief, to the known shores.”*<sup>67</sup>

There is a conflict in the mind of Jyoti. It is between the role she has been playing to please her husband and of being oneself. She desires to play the traditional role of a good wife. However, after a married life of thirty years she realizes that what she has lived has not been her life at all. and that it has been her husband's. She recognizes the self-centered, self-regarding, egocentric and even twofaced outlook of her husband. This realization goads her to take decision to leave him and try to live her life as per her wish. Her decision comes to Ram as a shock however he suggests her to go to Mahabaleshwar and rethink about her decision. Therefore she goes to Mahabaleshwar. At Mahabaleshwar, Jyoti ponders over her married life of thirty years and realizes that she herself is responsible for her pathetic condition. It is not Ram who dictated her but it is she who allowed him to dictate. She herself starved of the things she would have liked to do and relish in her life. She realizes that she herself allowed Ram to take lead in every matter. She realizes that she also contributed to her victimization. It also occurs to her that she is in no way inferior to him but only distinct from him.

Being brought up in traditional atmosphere, her submission to her husbands dictates also gave her pleasure for having followed ancient traditions. In fact, she is not aware that Ram is self-centered and is using her for his end. However, she can never realize that in this process she is effacing her identity. It also never occurs to her mind that male controlled traditions never allow woman to live as per her wish and proclaim her identity. But now she realizes that during last thirty years she gets nothing from her husband. She feels that he cheated her as he never gave her equal treatment. He merely plays with her feelings. The tragedy is that he ignores Jyoti and takes her for granted. Therefore, she arrives at the decision to leave Ram. She registers her protest by expressing her desire to leave Ram and live separately on her own. It is clear that self-realization on Jyoti's part is complete. Dr. Pawar M. S., in her book *“New Women Novelists with New Horizons”*, writes that:

*“In fact Ram does not insult her directly, but ignores her or take her for granted. The last stage of Jyoti’s protest is the attractive stage of her inner development. It is the stage of self-realization. She must solve her problems as a woman as different from a man.”<sup>68</sup>*

Jyoti’s secondary status in the family makes her dumb. The children also realize their mother’s suppression when they grow up. They do not like it and therefore, they demand that their mother should deny their father’s authority. But her conventional middle class personality restrains her from doing so. The youngsters demand for individual freedom. Their denial to follow the authority of their father is the result of their hatred for him. Unfortunately, Jyoti also becomes the victim of their resentment.

Jyoti desires to focus on her customary role of a wife and a mother. She has a characteristic female mindset to accept male domination. Her personality is the reflection of the typical traditional environment of her natal house in which she grew up. As a result, Ram can gain more power and Jyoti acquires marginal position. She plays the submissive, inferior role of a wife in Indian traditional patriarchal family. It is due the role models of wife around her, particularly of her mother. It is Jyoti’s nature to approve Ram’s authority and not to express her own views. In the course of time, Ram changes his behavior. He begins to ignore Jyoti. When it becomes unbearable to her, she thinks of separation from him. She decides to throw off the fetters of marriage. She gathers her courage and tells her decision to Ram. This is also in one sense her revolt against patriarchy and social norms.

Being conscious woman, Jyoti cannot take the final decision of separation. She is concerned about the reaction of society. She thinks of her mother, friends and the people for whom the couple, Jyoti and Ram, is an ideal one. She is concerned about all because she is closely linked with them. Along with these, there are other reasons for which she is unable to take the decision of separation. However, she seems to be conscious about traditional way of life and values. In this sense, she is tradition bound. In fact, Jai Nimbkar’s both female protagonists have due respect for Indian patriarchal and traditional norms and values. Therefore, Vineeta of *Temporary Answers* and Jyoti of *A Joint Venture* can be said typically tradition bound.

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## CHAPTER III

### Anita Desai's female protagonists as Victims of Neurosis

#### 3.1 Introduction

Anita Desai is one of the famous modern feminist novelists in India. She is highly praised in India as well as in other countries for her fictional writing. Her novel concentrates on the recent concerns and quandaries of female protagonist who belongs to post-independence era. She has given a fresh aspect to the modern Indian English fiction. As a result, she is able to protect a distinctive and important place among Indian English fiction writers. She effectively deals with feminine sensibility in all her literary output. Her obsession is to discover the deep inner self of her women characters. She digs into inner self of her female protagonists and goes beyond the external appearance. For her, literature is a means of an investigation and an inquest. It is not a means of escapee from reality. She prefers the personal to the unrestricted domain. She tries to avoid the conventional fixed routes of outer realism and physical world. In fact, her real concern is the exploration of human psyche, inner climate. She unravels the mystery of the inner life of her female characters.

Anita Desai believes in the intricacy of human relations and hence through her novels she deals with it predominantly the male-female relationship. She presents by and large the hopeless dilemma of female specifically the female suffering under their unfeeling, thoughtless, unresponsive husbands, fathers and brothers. Resultantly, her female protagonists suffer from estrangement, departure, lonesomeness, separation and lack of communication. They even way out to psychosis. Her protagonists are estranged from everything and everyone. They are estranged even from their own selves. They are not normal people but persons. Her female protagonists turn either into rebels or neurotics as a result of their alienation from the world.

Anita Desai's protagonists, being sensitive, find it difficult to adjust in the present machine-driven and urbanized setup. She is chiefly worried about the destiny of the marital woman in Indian society today. They are portrayed as the victims of the conventional way of life. They are tremendously aware of their lack of individuality. They struggle to gain self-identity but unfortunately their protest mostly turns into

frustration. The girl, in India, from her birth is taught to be passive, meek and obedient. Therefore, Desai tries to depict the oppressive and unfeeling conjugal bond and the unhappy situations of women in Indian society.

The depiction of man-woman relationship in her novels shows her accomplished craftsmanship. She honestly broods over the fate and future of modern middle class woman more particularly in male-dominated society and her annihilation at the altar of marriage. The important thing is that the novelist does not challenge the vainness of marriage as an organization. She successfully discloses the inner world of her female protagonists through their relations with family members, society and other members. In her novels, most marriages are proved to be blending of mismatch. Men are considered to be rational whereas women are sensitive and emotional. Her female protagonists have their different attitudes and interests so they look at things in different ways and react to the same conditions differently. Generally, women have been both racially and psychologically dependent on men. Therefore, if there is any hullabaloo of relationship or connection, it is measured not as a breakdown of connection but an entire loss of self-identity. It is subsequently considered as neurosis. Stress, uncertainties, despair, dissatisfaction, nervousness and dread become her protagonists fate and they lose their sense of reason and psychological dignity, for example Maya in *Cry, the Peacock*, and Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*

The handling of female susceptibility is the distinctive feature of Anita Desai's novels. In India, women have traditional and static roles. It does not permit them any scope for independence, distinctiveness and proclamation. Anita Desai writes of women who challenge the long standing conventions and want to seek individual growth. They attempt to reconsider the known in a new perspective and make the life meaningful. She maintains that a balance between the conventional, pre-designed role of women and the current concerns has to be struck.

Her female protagonists endeavor to find out meaningfulness in life through the recognized, the customary. Her characters are not normal but different from others. They fall short to discover suitable channel of interaction. They become estranged. They begin to think seriously about their lives. Finally they reach to the understanding that they have previously overlooked or discarded.

Anita Desai in her novels has shown how women have been beaten under male supremacy delightedly or reluctantly. In her earlier novels, she demonstrates how difficult it is for women, to recognize their needs, thoughts and requirements in life. Some of her female protagonists could protect their comforts. Some others fail or negotiate with surroundings in life. She is particularly well-known for her subtle depiction of the innermost life of her women characters. She, in her psychological novels, offers the image of a distressed woman anxious about her inward world. She writes about the existential quandary of a woman in a male-controlled society. Through her female protagonists, she makes an appeal for a better way of life for women. Anita Desai's prime focus is on searching women's lives within the limits of a male-controlled Indian social order. Many of her novels discover pressures between family members and the estrangement of middle class women from their male counterparts and society. The tensions and estrangement is because of noticeable or undercurrent male control that fit in their lives. The novelist is concerned with the everyday lives of commonplace females in their conventional roles as wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters. Her female protagonists are unable to determine the clash between their customary roles and their interests in life.

Anita Desai's female in general are confined in a society that compels them to compliance. They make an authentic endeavor to discover life as it is. Without doubt they are emotive eccentrics. They try to retain and proclaim their distinctiveness. Female protagonists of her novels are maltreated, dishonored and forced to either commit suicide or give up to the norms of the patriarchal family and society. In her novels, the female protagonist's triumph or disappointment depends on the response of the men in her life.

Anita Desai's female characters are typically phobic women. They are hypersensitive and engaged with their dreams and imagination. They are alienated from their environments. They frequently are different in their views as compared to others. They embark on a long journey of meditation and try to find the sense of their very being. Thus, they grieve more of their associations than others do.

## 3.2 *Cry, The Peacock*

### 3.2.1 Image of woman

Anita Desai's *Cry the Peacock* presents the mental upheaval of a young and extremely sensitive married girl, Maya. She is obsessed with a childhood forecast of a deadly catastrophe. She is the daughter of a rich advocate, Rai Sahib, in Lucknow. As her mother is dead and her brother has gone to America, she is alone in the house with her father. Therefore, she gets the most of her father's affection and attention. She becomes spoilt and docile. Perhaps because of this, after marriage, she could not reconcile with the harsh realities of life. In her difficult situation, she feels that nobody loves her except her father. Therefore, she says:

*"No one, no one else, ..... loves me as my father does."*<sup>1</sup>

Maya has unbalanced view of life and it is because her father showers an undue love on her. She has the impression that the world is a toy which is made particularly for her. Therefore, even after marriage, Maya expects the same attentions from her husband. She looks Gautama in her father's place. But Gautama is a busy, prosperous lawyer and too much engrossed in his own vocational affairs. He fails to meet her demands. Hence, she feels neglected and miserable. Maya finds a tremendous difference between her father and her husband. Her father was too much worried about her likes and dislikes and her husband is too much practical and not that much worried about her problems. So there is clash between her childhood world of fantasies and adult world of realities. It creates her mental imbalance, psychic disorder. Gautama is worried about her condition, hence, warns her of turning neurotic and blames her father for spoiling her.

Maya grieves from father mania and she is severely gripped with the forecast by the albino fortune teller of the demise either for her or her husband within four years of their marriage. The horrible words of the albino fortune teller continuously echo in her ears. As a result she feels distressed all the time. The words echo in her ears like the drumbeats of Kathakali. She continuously visions "*a demonic creature, the fierce dancer*".<sup>2</sup> She is haunted by "*A black and evil shadow*".<sup>3</sup> Because of her father's loving attention, she never gets the real view of the severe actualities of existence and deadly shadows in life. She is hyper-sensitive and not being exposed to

any reality of life before marriage, she gets confused when she is exposed to the realities of life. She longs for love. However, after marriage, her husband, Gautama fails to please her passionate yearning for love and life. She becomes the victim of the loneliness and silence of the house. She contemplates about her husband's lack of love for her. One day, she feels very frustrated, lonely and disturbed. Out of anger and frustration, she tells Gautama that he knows nothing about her. She tells him:

*“Oh, you know nothing of me and of how can I love.”<sup>4</sup>*

Unpredictably, Maya and Gautama are opposite to each other. There is no compatibility between them. On one hand, the female protagonist, Maya being emotional loves the beautiful, the colorful and the sensuous and on the other hand Gautama being practical ignores all this Maya loves. Wife is creature of instinct or an unruly and modern girl, while her buddy, husband is human being of shrewdness. She is Maya. The meaning of Maya is affection or interestedness towards life. He is Gautama. He stands for disinterestedness towards life. He is sensible as well as balanced. He has rational disinterestedness towards life. He is the follower of principles taught in the Bhagwad Gita. These differences in the temperament of the couple are definitely bound to lead them to conflict or clash.

There is communication gap between husband and wife. It leaves her to contemplate over the gloomy considerations of the albino fortune-teller's prediction. Gautama could have saved her from the haunting fears of black and evil shadows and beating of drums. For that he should have been considerate and attentive to Maya and her demands. She used to visit to her friend Leila and Pom. She also used to attend Mrs. Lal's party or go to the restaurant and the club to save herself from terror. However it proved to be ineffective to dismiss the creeping horror. Maya had a little respite when Gautama's mother and sister Nila came to live with them. She enjoyed her busy life with them but it was temporary. They left and Maya was again left in the empty house with her terrors and nightmares.

She is highly obsessed by the fantasy of albino fortune-teller. She remembers fortune-teller's chat regarding the parable about the peacock's cry. Therefore whenever she listens to the shouts of peacock in the spring season, she apprehends that she should never sleep in peace. She feels that she would never be able to escape

from this. She thinks that there is no one to save her from this. She is deeply in love with life. As a result she becomes mad due to the creeping fright of demise. She is not able to sleep and take rest. She has constant fear of death in her mind. She broods over her inner despair, and wonders if she was growing insane:

*“Am I gone insane? Father! Brother! Husband! Who is my savior?”<sup>5</sup>*

Maya suffers from headaches and experiences rages of insurgence and fear. She madly sees the visions of rats, snakes, lizards and iguanas creeping over her, slipping their club-like tongues in and out. Her gloomy house appears to her like her burial place. She contemplates in it over the impending dreadfulness of all. Then all of a sudden an optimistic idea is born in her mind. She remembers that the albino had predicted death to either of them. She imagines that it may be Gautama and not she whose life is endangered. She thinks that Gautama is separated and uninterested to life and therefore it will not matter to Gautama if he misses it. In this way she imagines the death of Gautama instead of her.

Maya, in her wayward thinking is preoccupied by the word ‘murder’. She is always under stress. The death of Toto, its effect on Maya’s mind, the astrologer’s prediction all these haunt Maya all the time. Moreover, her in-laws add to her miseries by pinching her on account of her childlessness. All these circumstances create continuous fear of death in her mind. She becomes neurotic. Her mental growth is obstructed. She is estranged from herself and depersonalization takes place. Many a time Maya feels that she is not human, but she is only a dream, an illusion. She herself as well as her name is nothing but a dream, an illusion. She becomes helpless, therefore, she says:

*“Only a dream. An illusion..... And I, who am nothing but an illusion.”<sup>6</sup>*

Maya’s personality remains impaired because of her self-hate, lack of self-analyses as well as her diminishing contact with the external world. She convinces herself that Gautama has hurt neurotic pride by rejecting her love. Therefore she condemns him to death and as a result loads herself with remorse. She is haunted by self-hatred, self-incrimination and self-hate. She slogs herself into complete dimness of the world of the stupid.



### 3.2.2 Maya's Quest for Identity

Anita Desai's female protagonists are mentally and reasonably cultured women. Right from her first novel *Cry, The Peacock*, she has shown many female protagonists and their search for individuality and freedom in a male controlled society. Indian women of the twentieth century have changed and the modern woman questions the prominent female model. Patriarchy is the foundation of male domination and females' subjugation. If women's problems are to be discussed then it is essential to discuss them in relation to men's relation. Both man and woman are essential to each other. However, the patriarchal system does not permit a man to recognize that his world is also fabricated around a woman. It is because of this women experience a sort of estrangement. She feels subjugated, ignored and demoralized.

India has a rich oral custom of story-telling and women are supposed to be the principal upholders of this tradition. They have done it through epics, legends, folklore, folk tales and folk songs. Now because of spread of education, the doors of education are opened for more girl children and the result is that they have started to write in English and incorporate Indian stories in the plots of their fiction, drama and poetry. They are doing it with feminine perspective.

The study of patriarchal outlooks even today displays that in comparison to previous generations there is some improvement in the condition of women but more or less they are same as earlier generations. The things have not changed totally. Even today in the patriarchal Indian society woman has to play dual role. First she has to play the conventional role as a woman and the second is as a person. But it is not easy to play these two roles at the same time. Hence, Indian woman faces difficulty in treating these roles equally and justly.

Maya, the female protagonist, is predisposed by the male-controlled social order and by male members of the society right from her childhood. She is spoiled by her father, Rai Saheb and given too much attention. As a result, Maya's thoughts, perceptions and all her vistas are influenced by her father. Even her brother Arjuna influences her thinking process and infuses his ideas into her mind. Her marriage with Gautama is not an appropriate one in any way. She is an emotive person while he is a

practical man. Her problems in marriage are more mental in nature. Though she lives in a nuclear family with Gautama, she is unable to create the perfect relationship with him on account of her mental detachment from him. Besides, his uncaring nature to her emotionality makes further it difficult to have perfect relationship between them. Lack of appropriate corporeal compatibility between Maya and Gautama becomes an obstacle in establishing emotive and rational compatibility between them. Tendencies of patriarchy are obvious in Gautama. For him, Maya is just a dispensable part of his life, while she wants him to be everything in her life. Besides, after marriage she textures her world around her husband, Gautama. Therefore, she once tells him:

*“Is there nothing in you that would be touched ever so slightly, if I told you I live my life for you?”<sup>7</sup>*

However, Maya’s mental condition does not appeal to Gautama. It makes no sense for him. Maya yearns for interaction with her husband but he does not recognize it. She longs to be with Gautama but every night when she goes to him, she finds him to be already slept. She intensely longs to be with and close to Gautama. Thus, there is communication gap between husband and wife. Therefore, she expresses her frustration as:

*“Longing to be with him, be close to him .... But when I went ... he had closed his eyes not with mere tiredness.”<sup>8</sup>*

Maya becomes obsessive with her barrenness and it has its negative impact on her life. This is also one of the factors for her restlessness. She wants to share her state of mind with her husband but he pays no attention to her request. Rather he fails to understand her psyche. She has to suffer from loneliness. If she had not been childless, she would have at least shared her feeling with her children perhaps. Moreover she is not sexually satisfied. Therefore her condition is very worse. One of the scholars, Prabhat Kumar Pandey exactly remarks that Maya’s catastrophe:

*“is that there is no one to share her feelings.”<sup>9</sup>*

She becomes dreadfully sad. She suffers from lonesomeness and becomes a mental wreck. She continues to sit and brood for hours. She is uncertain about her mental commotion. There is a lot of conflict in her mind. In frenzy, she pushes

Gautama from the roof top and kills him. After that she goes to her father's house in Lucknow. She returns to her favorite world of her infantile. Now she is cut-off from reality. She becomes a child in her world of pictures, books and toys.

*“... Maya, who sat somewhere upstairs delighted opening cupboards, pulling out drawers, falling upon picture – books and photographs with high, shrill cries of pleasure hugging them to her, dancing around the room with them on air-borne feet”.*<sup>10</sup>

Gautama fails to meet the demands of Maya. Furthermore, Gautama's treatment to Maya is in such a manner that Maya feels whatever Gautama gives her is insufficient. In addition to this, Maya being alone all the day at home suffers from the monotony and tedium of life. Her derailed state of mind is further destabilized by the prophecy of albino astrologer. Finally, everything leads to Gautama's murder and her suicide. She fails to resolve the conflict between her interests as Gautama's wife and Maya as a woman and an individual. She is unsuccessful in appreciating destiny or does not succeed in carrying her welfares in reality. Perhaps she is not prepared to face the circumstances bravely. She always fails to express her sentiments, views, her threats and her wishes. Mohan being dominant never allows her to express her sentiments. She tries to tackle the circumstance in her own way. She tries to tackle it on the emotional plane. She is not eloquent therefore Mohan also fails to understand what is there in her mind at a particular moment. She also has got stubborn nature and it makes her suffer. Because of her various apprehensions and unfulfilled wishes and desires, she goes mad and in a frenzy first she kills Mohan and then commits suicide. She longs for sexual union and yearns for the company as well as comradeship with Gautama. Mohan's indifference and disinterestedness has caused injury to Maya's soul therefore the cry of Maya's injured soul and the cry of the peacock sounds to be the same.

### **3.2.3 Husband and wife relationship**

Generally, Anita Desai in her fiction deals with the male-female relationship. That is her prime concern. Today, Man-woman relationship is at the core in literary world. The industrialization, mounting perceptions among female about their privileges, quest for self-identity and tendency to follow western approach of the

human beings in the society have their effects on human relations. Post-independence novelists deal this topic in a different manner than the pre-independence novelists. Pre-independence novelists focused on man-woman relationship as it should be but post-independence novelists focus on it as it is. Post-independence writers are:

*“Concerned with the quality of life and people, with world and value.”<sup>11</sup>*

Anita Desai like other Indo-Anglican writers is constantly concerned with the problem of interaction between man and woman, between the individuals and the society. Her main concern is to depict the psychic states of her protagonists at some vital stage of their lives. In most of her novels, she deals with the threats and intricacies of man woman relationships. Therefore, Narsimhan Raji rightly points out that:

*“The most recurrent themes in her novels are hazards and complexities of man-woman relationships.”<sup>12</sup>*

The present novel under study is not exception to that. In it, the dreamy and irrational wife, Maya and her practical lawyer husband, Gautama have tense relation because of their discordant personalities. In fact Maya's marriage with Gautama, a man double of her age takes place out of Maya's wish to satisfy her father. Therefore she has to live in her husband, Gautama's house and tolerate the cruelties of her husband and in-laws. Maya is sensitive and emotional while Gautama is insensitive and rational; Maya is fanciful while Gautama is realistic; one is emotional and high-strung; the other is detached, philosophical and remote. Maya is soft and warm; Gautama is hard and cold. Maya is extremely sensitive, imaginative, passionate and sensuous; her husband is materialistic, practical, pragmatic and unresponsive. The wife is the creature of instinct; the husband is that of intellect. Thus, their marriage is more or less a marriage of convenience. To Gautama love is merely an attachment. It is insufficient and too little. Gautama is very choosy in the matters like love, attachment and interestedness. He, being practical knows the dangers of admitting love.

The marital bonds between Maya and Gautama are very weak. For Maya passion, revenge, murder or exciting things like love, life or death of Toto are basic and important things. For Gautama, these things are not so important. Therefore, the

marital bonds that fasten them together are very brittle and weak “*neither true nor lasting*” but “*broken repeatedly*”<sup>13</sup> In connection with the incompatible temperaments of Maya and Gautama Meena Bellippa appropriately comments:

*“The incompatibility of character stands revealed – Gautama who touches without feeling and Maya who feels even without touching.”*<sup>14</sup>

There is marital dissonance amid husband and wife. The novel is a family drama. It deals with the nuptial disharmony between husband and wife i.e. Gautama and Maya. Maya craves for love and relationship in her unhappy wedding with Gautama. Therefore, the peacock’s cry is a suggestion of Maya’s anguished cry for love and life of participation. Maya’s conflicts arise out of the unrewarding marital bonds which are characterized by a lack of contact, relatedness and communication. Maya believes in involvement whereas Gautama is the preacher of detachment. Though they are living as husband and wife for many years now, still they are like strangers to each other. Maya considers love as an ecstatic feeling. She talks of life and death. Like peacocks, she wants to enjoy the ecstasy of life. But unfortunately, Maya is unable to achieve the interpersonal fusion – the union of body and mind – with her husband. Her agony is evident in the following lines:

*“But then he knew nothing that concerned me..... Telling me to go to sleep while he worked at his papers.”*<sup>15</sup>

Thus, there is twist and stress in the relationship of husband and wife. They are not able to respond properly to each other’s behavior patterns. Perhaps it may have occurred because of contrasting levels of understanding of both. Maya is emotional, highly sensitive and a sterile woman and Gautama is a busy, prosperous, middle-aged lawyer. The husband is too much engrossed in his own affairs as a result he fails to meet the demands of his young wife. His sensibilities, being too rough and practical, do not suit Maya’s sensibilities. She is the pampered child of Rai Saheb, and is brought up in an atmosphere of luxury. Although Gautama is a faithful husband who loves and cares her in his own way yet Maya feels that she is not loved or is being neglected. Thus, she is never satisfied and happy. In fact, the essential element i. e. companionship is missing in their relationship. Usha Pathania, a well-known critic, in this connection says:

*“Marital relationships are established with the explicit purpose of providing companionship to each other.”*<sup>16</sup>

There is a gap of communication between Maya and Gautama. Maya has too much attachment with her father and she takes Gautama as a substitute for her father. In fact Maya's life is very much connected with her father's individual attention and affection. As a result, she fails to lead self-regulating life. She expects individual care and love from Gautama as her father and Gautama fails to give it. Maya feels frustrated because her husband, Gautama fails to prove himself to be a perfect substitute for her father. It is also true that Gautama does not respond positively to the feelings of Maya's young heart and also fails to remove Maya's father obsession.

Maya prefers to live in the world of reminiscences and Gautama in the world of contemporaneous. Maya is a jailbird of the bygone. She submerges herself in the world of reminiscences. Gautama assents actuality and truths. He accepts them very practically as they are. However, Maya instead of accepting the truths of life tries to live in her fancy and fairy domain. She never tries to come out of her father obsession. She is the victim of it. She recalls her childhood days and indulges in it. She also recalls the treatment that her father meted out to her. She thinks that she is loved by her father only. She looks for her father in Gautama and Gautama does not pay attention to it. Being oversensitive, Maya is dreadfully distressed at the death of her dog, Toto. She loses her mental peace but Gautama disregards passionate desire of Maya for the pet dog. He tries to console her by only saying that he would bring another dog for her. His approach is of very carelessness to Maya. He fails to console her. He is not able to understand her sorrow. She thinks that it is not his rigidity but he deliberately tries to maintain the distance between them. It compels her to consider him to be thoughtless and inconsiderate. *“But then, he knew nothing that concerned me.”*<sup>17</sup> At the very beginning of the novel, Maya's pet dog, Toto dies. Maya has an attachment with it. It upsets her very much and the matter is worsened for her. For her, it is not only the death of pet but it is more than that. Therefore she becomes disturbed and distressed. She herself confesses: *“it was not my pet's death alone that I mourned today.”*<sup>18</sup>

She has fanatic attachments with her pet dog, Toto. She is childless and perhaps because of this she might have that attachment with the pet. Being sterile, she might have taken the dog as a child substitute:

*“Childless women do develop fanatic attachments to their pets, they say”.*<sup>19</sup>

In the death of the pet dog, Maya also sees a reflection of her own death, an illusory realization of the prophecy. The prominent reason behind Maya’s excessive grief over the death of the dog seems to be her attachment with it. Since Maya is childless, she suffers inwardly. Loving the pet dog like a child with the motherly affection is the basic impulse of Maya. But Gautama feels nothing uncommon in the death of the dog as perhaps he never liked pet animals. He tries to console Maya by saying that he would bring another dog for her. He couldn’t understand Maya’s attachment with Toto and hence hurts her. The death of the dog may be trivial for Gautama but it was lot for Maya. He fails to understand Mays’s shock and sorrow by this incident.

One of the reasons for the failure of Maya-Gautama relationship is the nature of their sexual relationship. Maya always yearns for bodily union and Gautama is cold, engrossed in his studies. The other reason is that the marriage between Maya and Gautama was more or less a marriage of comfort and suitability. Gautama was a friend of Maya father. Both of them were sharing the same thoughts. Gautama was the regular visitor of Maya’s father.

One more reason for their marital discord is that they are different in every respect – age, temperament, mentality, spirituality, intellectuality, sensitiveness etc. As a result they could never come close to each other mentally as well as spiritually. Therefore there is incompatibility between them. Maya’s sexual desires are not reciprocated by Gautama in a satisfying way. When Maya’s mind is full of unsatisfied sexuality, Gautama can only think of work. She pines to satisfy her physical starvation. When her physical need is not satisfied, she would lie wakeful the whole night suppressed by the physical starvation. In the course of time, she started to consider her relationship with Gautama as a relationship with death. Perhaps Anita Desai has used the foreteller albino as merely a literary device and through this she has revealed the concealed fear of Maya. Thus the sensuality of Maya is not

reciprocated by Gautama in a satisfying way. Maya's mind is filled with unsatisfied sexuality but Gautama pays no attention to all her cravings.

*"His eyes remained blank of appraisal, of any response."*<sup>20</sup>

When Maya's world is full of sensuality and sexuality, Gautama's world is full of rationality and detachment from pleasure and sexuality. Maya's world is the world of senses, sounds, movements, odours, colours and music, but Gautama always failed to satisfy Maya's expectations. She wanted to be with her husband, to share his love but Gautama fails to provide it. Whenever Maya is in romantic mood, Gautama remains detached.

Because of this she is not able to sleep throughout the night. Maya tries to sleep but she couldn't. She hears the peacock crying and relates her predicament to that of peacock – yearning for love, summoning their companions. *"Pia, pia ..... Lover, Lover. Mio, mio, - I die, I die."*<sup>21</sup> Maya likens her cry with the cry of peacock in the following words: *"I heard their cry and echoed it."*<sup>22</sup>

Once, Maya expresses her desire to see the Kathakali dance in the South. Gautama advised her that she should wait for that till a kathakali troupe comes to Delhi. This is the indication of the indifferent attitude on Gautama's part towards Maya. Maya is suffering from sense of father-fixation and therefore compares Gautama with her father. But she finds nothing of her father Rai Saheb in him. She finds no tenderness, no sophistication of her father in him. She expresses her feelings in the following words:

*"I longed with the fiercest desire, not even for Gautama, but for my gentle father who would have said to me, with assured and reassuring calm."*<sup>23</sup>

Maya all the time seeks for assurance that everything will be well in her life but it is never attained from Gautama's side. It resulted in a vacuum in Maya's heart which slowly but steadily filled with negative thoughts. Besides, she suffered owing to the prophecy of the albino that one of the couple will die in the fourth year of marriage. It haunted the mind of Maya all the time. She became insane and thought that Gautama was not involved with life and did not care for it. It was unimportant for him whether he was alive or not. She thought if only one of them was to be alive



obviously she should live and not Gautama. She goes so frenzy that she murders Gautama and meets her own death.

As Gautama has got inconsiderate and indifferent attitude towards the sensibility, emotions of Maya and also the difference of philosophy of life of both, there is marital discord between them. Maya believes in attachment and Gautama believes in detachment. Gautama's philosophy of life can be understood in his quote from 'Gita':

*"Thinking of the sense objects, man becomes attached thereto. From attachment arises longing and from longing anger is born"*<sup>24</sup>

It is Gautama who believes in detachment gives no importance to attachment in life. He equates love with attachment. He has misconceptions about love and truth. Perhaps it may be because of his practical mindedness. His conception of love and truth is devoid of the emotion and tradition. Besides, he can't put Maya's passions and longings in their proper perspective. Maya suffers for Gautama's unresponsiveness towards life as well as Maya. Consequently, Gautama appears Maya to be:

*"He was not on my side at all, but across a river, across a mountain and would always remain so."*<sup>25</sup>

Maya loves life whereas Gautama remains unmoved by any earthly pleasures. His definition of love and life is based on the principle of detachment. Therefore he is against of Maya's conception of life. When Maya refuses to understand Gautama's principle or logic, he cries out in utter disgust:

*"Really, it is quite impossible to talk to a woman."*<sup>26</sup>

Finally, the researcher observes that Maya and Gautama could never match each other because of their temperamental and mental differences.

### **3.2.4 Feminine Sensibility**

This novel is a distinctive instance of the female's libber point of view. Anita Desai has brought out the exclusivity of feminine sensibility through the reactions as well as retorts of the central character to the happenings and situations that take place

in her life. Maya is the central character in the novel. She is married to an inconsiderate and unresponsive husband, Gautama. Therefore, her life is a passage from sensitive haziness at the opening of the novel to insanity, irrationality and murdering her husband and committing suicide at the end of the novel. The novelist does not oblige any obvious assertion to radical cause but without doubt she is absorbed with the quandary of woman in the male-controlled society.

Maya is very sensitive, an extremely emotive and affective woman. She loves life very much. She is ordinary and healthy woman. Her sole drawback is that she is over sensitive, imaginative, passionate and sensuous and hence represents the disturbed psyche of modern Indian woman. She attempts to strike balance between formal requirements and rational ambitions. Therefore, when the existential absurdity comes before her, she feels extremely puzzled. After marriage she experiences loneliness, frustration and lack of communication. She feels herself in psychological catastrophe. She has very affectionate relationship with her father, Rai Saheb. She feels very sorrow to leave her father's house at the time of marriage. Her problem lies in her motherlessness. She was brought up by her father. Perhaps because of that she has grown detached from the outside world. Therefore, she writes,

*“... my childhood was one in which much was excluded, which grew steadily more-restricted, unnatural even.”*<sup>27</sup>

The aspirations and expectations that she had from her husband who was much older than her are not fulfilled. As a result, the feeling of incompetency occupies her mind. She considers her husband, Gautama, as a man having very little understanding and meager love for her. But it is half truth. Gautama loves and cherishes her but his fault is that he does not take her seriously. He identifies her with “Maya”, which repulses her and to which she objects. In the course of time, her restlessness grows and she begins to contemplate over the feeling of hollowness in her heart. In this connection she says,

*“I had yearned for the contact that goes deeper than flesh – that of thought – and longed to transmit to him.”*<sup>28</sup>

Maya is an extremely sensitive protagonist. She is a woman who could not succeed to come to terms with dominion and patriarchal order. Although she was

living in the world that is the world of male supremacy, Maya could not cope up with it. She revolts against it in her own way. As the story progresses, she seeks her mother in the natural landscapes and gardens, finds comfort in it. Still, one cannot reject her personal feelings and earnest desires. Maya is an affluent housewife having all the requirements of a comfortable city life fulfilled. In spite of it, she is neither happy nor satisfied. She is not the ideal or contented housewife. She does not compromise with the situation that overpowers her self-identity and womanly longing till the death. Maya is rebellious woman and she fails to identify herself with her husband, Gautama's world. She also finds herself estranged from the affection of her father. On the other hand, she suffers from insecurity and powerlessness as she has to depend on her husband in financial matters.

Maya continuously tries to explore of new landscape for a woman's world, a room in which she is equal with man. When she sees the dance of the peacock's who destroy each other in spite of being madly in love, Maya thinks of her married life with Gautama. Maya feels it to be a deadly struggle in which one is fated to kill the other. Maya is ragged between her love for life and her fear of death. She is deeply experiencing the sense of loneliness and insecurity, she says:

*"God, now I am caught in the net of the inescapable, and where lay the possibility of mercy, of release".*<sup>29</sup>

Maya in her view is compelled to emotive unpredictability, craziness and even killing under the burdens of conjugal disharmony. It is clear from the following statement regarding the marriage:

*"It was broken repeatedly, and repeatedly the pieces were picked up and put together again".*<sup>30</sup>

Anita Desai tries to project a feminine sensibility generally not encountered with other Indo-Anglican writers of fiction. She insists on analysis of characters, and the anecdotes and fables are important only to reflect the obsessions and suppressions of her characters. Her each work is a haunting quest of the psychic self. She provides a new aspect to English fiction through the assessment of distressed emotional response, distinctive neo-Indian phenomena.

The novel portrays the most sensitive woman suffering from neurotic fears and marital disharmony. She wants to live life to its full length but as soon as she leaves father's house and enters into in-laws house she gets baffled by the harsh realities of life. In father's house she led a life of fairy in fairy tale. In Gautama's house she finds exactly opposite atmosphere to her father's house. The novel presents the story of a young, hypersensitive and neurotic woman Maya.

This is more elegant as well as suggestive Indian novel in English. It expresses the exclusive deep feeling of a fragile female protagonist and the indifferent and utilitarian attitude of an unsympathetic other half. Here are the couple of most valuable and important words. They are impartiality as well as independence. It is in reality tough for a female to cope up with the truth of life and submit to the conservative Hindu ideologies. Different critics have different perceptions about the novel. They have dissimilar views about the novel.

### **3.2.5 Revolt against tradition and social norms**

Anita Desai's female protagonists suffer more from the battles raging within them than from outside influences. In her novels the central stage is occupied by the sensitive, unhappy, unfulfilled 'mad' women who try to resolve the battles arising within them. She also portrays a woman's inner world, her sensibility and frustrations who strive to find a balance between the yearnings of their inner self for emancipation and dignity and the outer world which seems insensitive to their problems. Maya suffers because she finds herself unsuited to play the customary female's role. The research scholar, Shanta Krishnaswamy appropriately writes:

*“What she portrays is the deeply felt and suffered rebellion against the entire system of social relationships.”*<sup>31</sup>

Maya faces the hostile environment. She reacts to this environment sensitively and in her own way. Thus, earns herself the label of insanity. Maya craves with a tortured mind for compassion and understanding, but Gautama offers her logic and wisdom and remains indifferent. He is indifferent to Maya's suffering. Maya voices the need for 'real love' which is not fulfilled.

Maya has a very tender relationship with her father and hence, she is not happy to leave her home at marriage. Her mother dies when she is a child. It affects her upbringing. She remains detached from the world outside. Even after marriage her expectations from her husband are not fulfilled. Gautama, her husband is much older than her. He is almost double of her age. As her expectations are not fulfilled, she becomes more stultifying. She feels that Gautama's understanding is scant and love is meager. No doubt that she is loved as well as appreciated by her father and her male-partner but she is never taken sincerely by them. This is because she is a female. They recognize her with "Maya" according to Hindu perception. She does not like it and objects to it. As time passes, she becomes more and more agitated. She experiences hollowness at heart and she ponders over it.

*"But those were the times when I admitted to the loneliness of the human soul, and I would keep silent."*<sup>32</sup>

Maya, being extremely sensitive woman fails to come to terms with domination of male-controlled order. She lives in the male's world but she declines to recognize to it. She rebels against the patriarchal order. She revolts against it in her own way by seeking solace in the nature and natural objects. She tries to seek her lost mother in the natural landscapes and gardens. Birds and animals fill the emptiness at her heart, a space that human relationships fail to fill in Maya's life. In the company of nature she feels protected. Nature does not reject her inert feelings and her deepest desires. She is an affluent housewife. She has everything required for comfortable city life however, she is not satisfied. 'Bhartiya Nari' is a contented housewife. She compromises her position. She suppresses her self-identity and feminine desires in her heart till she is buried at death. If we judge Maya from this point of view then Maya is definitely not the 'Bhartiya Nari'.

Maya is a rebellious woman. She is unable to identify herself with her husband Gautama's practical world. She feels estranged from the affection. She also thinks that her marriage with Gautama has taken away the affection of her father. Therefore, she becomes a nature's child. She cannot be equated with the stereotyped Indian woman. Maya is rebellious to the idea of ideal housewife. In spite of a secure economic status, she is a complete recluse. In financial matters she is totally

dependent on her husband. It makes her feel rather unsecured and helpless and non-effective. She is ineffective to her “protector’s” eyes.

Maya is post-independence new woman who resists patriarchy. Hers is a self-gained image of “female”. In Indian culture woman is expected to be ‘feminine’ and ‘adarshanari’. It is expected and accepted in male dominated social structure. Maya rebels against it because she finds it difficult to fix her within the structure of an Indian stereotypical womanhood. There are other individualities in Maya’s character which exceeds the idea of “femininity”. She is in search of a new panorama for a woman’s world. She expects to be treated equally with man. She tries to explore a space where she is at par with man.

Anita Desai, who writes for woman and about woman, does not depict her female protagonist in two versions i. e. temporal consciousness and spiritual consciousness. In temporal consciousness woman is weak, meek and submissive. She is depicted as ideally ‘Abala’. She is presented as dependent on man related to him as her father or husband or son. In religious or spiritual consciousness, the image of woman is depicted “Shakti” with ten arms, power to destroy all evils. Desai does not depict her Maya as ideally meek and submissive. She is rebellious and hence, dismisses patriarchy. She dismisses the idea of a “four-wall bound Indian woman”. In the traditional set up of society woman’s prime duty is her family. She has to lead a life as someone’s daughter, someone’s wife or someone’s mother. In this set up woman’s independent individuality is non-existing. It is rather not accepted. Desai’s rebellious female protagonist silently revolts against patriarchy and escapes into the nature’s abode – a world of flowers, trees, water and mountains. It is her own world in which she is able to assert her individuality, femaleness. In this world, she is not bound to the household bonds and not treated as subsidiary to someone as she treated in patriarchy.

Though Maya’s world is full with supplements, happiness of riches, of the odor and beauty of her garden’s flowers, she suffers from hollowness, a sense of insignificance. She longs for belongingness and an independent being. The sense of bareness hangs out her relentlessly. She is scared of loneliness. However she is not ready to open up to the world. She is afraid of not being recognized as an independent existential being. She wants to be a “woman”, a “female” basically distinct from a

“male”, without whom her existence is measured meaningless. This is a memorable situation for this is not agony of every woman, but of only the woman who feels alienated and suppressed by bondage, a burden of patriarchal norms. It is a woman’s anguish who dreams of being unconventional, with detestation for male authority of any kind. Hence Maya creates a secluded space of her own filled with the colours of flower and aggrieved by the unresponsiveness of her husband Gautama to her world. She writes”

*“Grey, grey, all was grey for Gautama, who lived so narrowly, so shallowly.”<sup>33</sup>*

Her predicament becomes indistinguishable with madness. Maya’s fears are tongue-tied but not groundless. She fails to recognize herself with her position as a “wife” and “daughter-in-law”. It compels her to feel “houseless” amid her material riches. An ideal woman limited to womanhood in the male-controlled society, she is expected to reestablish and redefine herself. But Maya fails in this respect. After her husband’s death, she comes back to her father’s house even then she is not able to feel satisfied. She suffers from dissatisfaction.

### **3.3 Where Shall We Go This Summer?**

#### **3.3.1 Image of Woman**

This is an outstanding novel. It deals with the story of an oppressed mind. It portrays penetrating individuality, catastrophe of the female protagonist, Sita. She is a sensitive woman at her early forties. She finds herself estranged from her husband and children. She is highly emotional, hypersensitive, intellectual, freedom loving woman. She has the aptitude to look at things in the normal way. She finds it very difficult to live in male controlled culture as well as in this practical civilized world.

Sita is absolutely not a normal female. She imagines that kids are a cause of concern, worry as well as gloom. She is never able to seek pleasure, affection and adoration from them. The only mania, she finds from them is ‘sentimentality’. As there is not correspondence between Sita’s her mental construct and her chronological age, her mind turns into an unadulterated blend of the usual and the unusual, the perfect and the unimportant, the gorgeous and the horrid. Her ideas and activities are

determined more by the former happenings than the actualities of the present-day and the possible course of future happenings. She wants to live in the gamut of adjourned time defying its unavoidable fluidity, growth and annihilation. In some cases, the grown up Sita has the impractical conceptual outlooks of a child or at best youthful. She is unable to live and adjust with the era and period of her current situation. She fails to attempt her best to face the rudimentary difficulties of life. She doesn't have tolerance. Therefore, instead of facing the problem she wishes an escape as a coward from the battlefield.

Sita is rebellious and non-conformist woman. She is disgusted by male-controlled norms. She tries to liberate herself from it. She is a new woman. She does not like to be confined within the four walls of her house. She is expected to behave as an ideal wife and mother. She does not like it.

Sita's own attitude to married life must have been damaged by the knowledge and experiences in regard to her parents. Her childhood was very miserable and lonely which is deeply rooted in her mind. This is the cause of her unhappiness. Her mother had run away to Benares and had left her husband and children behind and had not given any information about herself. She could not enjoy her mother's love. Her father also failed to shower his love and to take care of his children properly.

Sita at the time of her fifth pregnancy begins to feel unloved and uncared. She begins to feel an unusual seclusion and worry in her life. She is unhappy and worried as she thinks that her unborn child after its birth will lose innocence in this cruel world. Hence, she protests and decides to live her own life as per her wish. She escapes to her dream island of her childhood i. e. 'MANORI'. She wishes to have independent female status. She wants to liberate herself from male-controlled bondages and fetters. She finds herself it difficult to continue to live in the house of her in-laws. Her escape to "MANORI" can be taken as significant gesture. It is not hysteric reaction of mad woman. Through it, she tries to release herself from frustration and restore her identity. She tries to find some solace from regular drudgery.

Sita, like the legendary Sita of the epic *Ramayana* had spent many crucial years of her life on the island of her childhood, Manori. The modern Raman, unlike



the legendary Rama fails to understand his wife. The mythical ideal Indian woman, Sita and Desai's Sita are two characterizations of ideal womanhood, femininity. Anita Desai's Sita chooses exile on her own accord. Whereas Sita from *Ramayana* proves her chastity and loyalty after she was suspected of losing her chastity to Ravana. She was also pregnant like Anita Desai's Sita. But her Sita is transversal of mythical Sita. Her exiling herself is an attempt to assert her.

Marriage does not seem to bid Raman and Sita any answer rather it worsens the condition sternly. They lead their life like a mismatched couple. They lack in harmony altogether in their lives. Their marriage bond has been proved to be a union of incompatible temperaments. Sita feels herself to be a prisoner in in-laws house which offers her nothing but only a monotony and desperate frustration. She finds it difficult to cope with the unpleasant surroundings in the house and with her practical, unresponsive and rational husband. As a result she becomes hypersensitive and resorts to smoking, abuses her children for trivial matters and gets very irritated when she finds the servants talking in the kitchen. She therefore decides imprudently not to give birth to the fifth child in a world of violence and detestation. For her the world is a habitation:

*“where the crows that were attacking a wounded eagle on a neighboring roof top”*<sup>34</sup>

She feels upset and grows insolent conduct to rebel against her family members. In anxiety, she decides to leave the house when her husband, Raman asks the innocent question *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* She insists on escape from the mainland to the island of her childhood, Manori. She is under impression that she will find the same magic, comfort and solace as she had found in her childhood. She writes:

*“What I am doing is trying to escape from the madness here, escape to a place where it might be possible to be sane again.”*<sup>35</sup>

Sita's return to island, Manori is the result of her desire to pamper in imaginary or illusion. She does not wish to face the reality. She thus makes an effort to shut down emotionally and detach herself from her daily activities as a housewife. She considers an illusion as defensive umbrella. She wants to hide her incapability to

adjust herself to the existing norms and principles of society to which she belongs. Anita Desai here symbolizes the general longing of womankind for an individual uniqueness. This also embodies woman's passionate craving for the fullest life. Sita wants to provide her unborn child a corruption free world, a world free from mere hunger and sex. This desire of Sita drives her to Manori.

Sita spends few months there at Manori and saves herself from sweat and turmoil of the urban atmosphere in the Bombay. But very soon she begins to feel that her attempt to escape from her family, her husband and her children is nothing but a mere fantasy. She understands that Manori is an island which is an illusionary symbol to escape the real life but it cannot provide a solution to the ills of reality. She cannot escape from the sullen and harsh realities of the world. Therefore she decides to go back to her home, her husband and her children and face the harsh realities. She also decides to compromise with the situation in real life. When her husband, Raman comes to the island and persuades her to go back with him, she agrees to do so. Desai perhaps through Sita's realization wants to state the philosophy of acceptance of life, the bitter truth of life. Perhaps the message is that everyone must accept the condition in which he or she is placed, thus, compromise and adjustment are the keys of happiness. The interrogation used as the title of the novel, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* leaves a big question mark. The title of the novel itself is indicative of an escape from the summer that stands for the intense inner pressure, frustration, dissatisfaction, mental discordance and conflict of the inner perception of Sita.

Sita as a shattered bird of the coastline examines the reason of her nervousness and irrational behavior. Through examination she learns to nurture the art of endurance in the fated life. Sita realizes that the island of Manori is irrevocable therefore it is useless to go back to it. With the reduction of her ego, she becomes more and more conscious of human relationship. She realizes that the escape from the harsh realities of life is not going to help her in any way. It is not going to offer any solution to her spiritual dead end. Instead she becomes aware that she needs to face it boldly. This realization helps her to regain her lost faith. Sita is not only brave enough to complaint against her conditions but also bold enough to take blame on herself for being a coward and not facing reality.

Thus Sita has been presented as a shattered and frustrated woman who feels trapped in the monotony of her house. Her phobic worries and apprehensions make her appalling aware of violence around her. She feels that even her husband doesn't understand her tender feelings for preserving the baby. She goes to Manori revolting against all norms and sane advice. Her aggressiveness towards Raman and her children shows that she wants to triumph over everyone. In protecting the child from the harshness of the world, rather unconsciously she is trying to prove that she can even control the cycle of nature. The maladjustment between Raman and Sita is based on the clash of values, principles and of even faith. It is a conflict between the compromises with disappointment.

### **3.3.2 Quest for Self-identity**

In this novel dominance of male member in the family forms as well as reforms the life of the female protagonist, named Sita. It may be seen as female protagonist's attempt to communicate 'no' to her hubby and lead her life as per her desire. It vividly reveals the clash of interest of husband and wife. Sita, the female protagonist, is also motherless like Maya. Both of them are brought up by their fathers. Both of them are deprived of their mother's attention, love and care. Being motherless, Sita has to shape her world around her father. She develops father fixation in her mind and has to suffer a lot owing to this fact. In the course of time she happens to watch his uncertain and deceitful life, she cultivates a destructive outlook towards life. She begins to distrust men. After that she is never able to develop a kind of substantial tie with any other man throughout her life. Her marriage with Raman is not satiating in true sense of the term. Though she has given birth to four kids and is about to give birth to fifth child, there is no substantial bond between husband and wife. Even at this point there is no mutual understanding between Sita and Raman. She is not only burdened with household tasks and obligations but also she has to cope up with a man who is indifferent and does not comprehend her feelings and desires.

This is a common feeling experienced by many female protagonists of Anita Desai. Women are psychologically manipulated by the male-controlled society. They are made to feel unwanted and uncared for by the gender roles dictated to them by society and men. Raman values Sita only as the mum of his children and nothing

more than that. There is no emotive or rational congruity between them at all. In a maladjusted marriage, she feels that she:

*“lost all feminine, all maternal belief in child birth, all faith in it and began to fear it as yet one more act of violence and murder in a world.”*<sup>36</sup>

Raman and Sita hold contradictory outlooks, standards, ethics and ideals. They even vary in their tempers. Raman takes Sita to be an insolent, supercilious and temperamental woman. On the contrary, she is very truthful and straight forward. She is not an opportunist. Her insanity is a clash between the uprightness and pretense seen around her. Sita is an intellectually advanced woman. Desai emblematically describes the conflict in Sita’s mind through the image of a crowd of crows attacking an eagle. Sita compares herself to a Jelly fish:

*“Perhaps I am only like the jelly fish.”*<sup>37</sup>

The above-mentioned comparison validates her thrown away self. Sita is not happy at all in her in-law’s house. Therefore she calls it as *“age – rotted flat”*.<sup>38</sup> She finds the truth that everything around her is extremely disgusting and, therefore, she decides to go to Manori her birth place. She aims to freeze her womb and neither to terminate it, nor give birth to it. Sita in her childhood has led a happy-go-lucky life in Manori. Hence, she supposes that all her difficulties would succumb once she goes to Manori, the utopian island for her. She goes to Manori along with her two children, Maenaka and Karan. Her children don’t like the life in Manori. They desire to go back to Bombay. Maenaka writes a letter to her father and requests him to come and to take her back to Bombay. She deliberately does not tell her mother because she has the fear that her mother would not allow her to write a letter. Raman comes to Manori, not for Sita but to take his child and this breaks her down completely. Sita tries to explore the old magic of her paternal home, but does not find it there. She slowly realizes that her father’s house in Manori no longer carried the same magic it used to. She finally goes home. Noteworthy critic T. S. Anand has rightly pointed out that:

*“Her desire to bear the child and retire with Raman to the land signifies her return to life, community and society in spite of the debased dullness of life  
.....”*<sup>39</sup>

In the end Sita realizes the futility of seeking freedom and reconciles with circumstances, and goes back to her husband. She is presumably a liberated woman, free from patriarchal oppression. Yet patriarchal attitudes run as an undercurrent. However, she comprehends and yields to the world.

It is the tale of Sita. Sita like Anita Desai's other female protagonists tries to poise existence and death, extraction and connection, involvement and suppression. She is a woman in quest of identity. Her struggle is continuous one in which she fights to attain concord between the internal and the external world. She has four kids, a husband and a house and in spite of that she is in search of her individuality. She gets married to Raman and in the course of time becomes the mother of four children. She goes to Mumbai, an unfamiliar city and suffers from a desperate sense of estrangement.

Sita's fifth pregnancy brings bodily alterations as well as profound mental pains. She wants to go back to Manori, her father's wonder island. She finds it monotonous to live in the city as it hints at 'solidity' of streets and 'security' of houses. There is only dreariness and desperate disillusionment. She does not want to deliver her baby. She has fear that the born baby will lose its purity in this monotonous world. She comes back to the magic island with a strong conviction that she will be able to withhold the baby and keep it away from the harsh world:

*"She had come here in order not to give birth... she was on the island in order to achieve the miracle of not giving birth."*<sup>40</sup>

Sita has never responded in this manner during her previous four pregnancies. She has enjoyed them. She could find self-righteousness through her children. They have assisted her to discharge her impatient vitalities. However, this time she recognizes a frightening sensation of forfeiture with the birth. She feels that this world is insensitive. It does not give that much importance to human existence. Therefore she doesn't want to lose the priceless, uncontaminated self, so well protected in the womb by delivering it into this insensitive world. She finds too much of violence in the uncaring society. But her husband, Raman fails to understand her feelings. He tries to soothe her but it is ineffective.

Raman is puzzled when he finds that in spite of his attempts to soothe Sita, she is not consoled. Then he feels tired and quits admitting her abnormality. The children also get used to their father's practical world and also get used to the filth and ferocity. They not only detach themselves from their mother, but also discard her. Sita is unable to accept the world full of blood and ferocity. It becomes impossible for her to settle herself to the stubborn vehemence. She wants to change not only the society but the facts of nature too. Sita wishes to offer her unborn baby as an alternative. The clash between Sita's penetrating self and the unresponsive world is portrayed through a series of situations. These situations convey pressure and clash. They compel Sita to put in her aggrieved and injured soul in its defensive case. Sita recognizes herself with the gratified bold eagle.

Sita declines to admit the power of the society because violence and endangerment are the integral features of it. Raman does not intend to reject the dictates of society but Sita wants to lead and choose her life herself. The long exhausted years of wedding and guardianship, make her aware of the futility of life. She feels estranged as her husband and children fail to comprehend her feelings. She feels no joy in human relationships, so she wishes to inhibit the series of experience that make anguish and ferocity possible.

Sita is fed up of discharging her responsibilities and commitments towards her husband and children. Her extreme frustration appears to be crumbling her down. Her children's approach towards her is horribly infuriating. In her extreme moments of downheartedness, she finds no possibility of another torturous child birth. She has also fear that if she gives birth to the baby, it would like her other children, castoff her as a mad woman. Also being forty years old, she doesn't have physical capacity to deliver the child.

Sita has reached a stage of "inwardness", and her denial to deliver is indicative of her frustration and dissatisfaction with life. She does not want her baby to go through the agony of child birth. She is well aware that it is not possible to keep the baby in her womb. She knows that it is impossible but she wishes to accomplish her longing to go to her father's island. She has not been able to detach herself totally from the reminiscences of her childhood. She thinks it to be always together. She desires to yield to her babyhood, to the island.

She desires to pull out herself from her husband's home to her father's magic island Manori. She goes back to the island after twenty years. She makes an awkward attempt to reinvent the past and regain the life on the island of more than twenty years ago. Her first passage was with her father in her childhood. Her second passage to the island describes her quandary and her disappointment with life. Sita is well conscious that her search for lost beauty and innocence is certain to be ruined as a disappointment. However, she feels that there is an urgent need to modify the present. She desires to live in the past. The island once again turns out to be her vision, a visualization that would be able to accomplish her wish.

Unquestionably, life seemed complete at the seeming level. Slowly but steadily she recognizes the gap formed in her life by her mother's absenteeism. She grows and enters into her youth in the absenteeism of a mother. She longs to be close to her father who is a man with magic but could not because of her elder sister. The desire of contact with the mother is intensified by the mystery around her absence. She ascertains herself to her mother. She has to spend her childhood and youth in loneliness because her mother has run away leaving her, her father and her siblings. Her father is obsessed with his elder sister. Her brother is self-centered. It is clear that Sita had an abnormal childhood for many reasons.

The third part of the novel juxtaposes Sita with the present realism. The past had become an enchanted retreat from the monotonous mainland and everyday life. Homesickness had generated a necessity to find a sense of belongingness in Sita's mind. Her coming back to the island and her children getting used to the island, provides her happiness and contentment. However, it was temporary. With the baby's birth time drawing closer Sita becomes self-centered, she finds herself nearer to actuality.

Sita becomes aware of the fact that the island has nothing much to give to her children's growing minds. It could only provide them a short transformation and relief. Sita understands her altered relationship to the island. Twenty years back, this magic island had given her and her family a shelter and protection. She grew up in that atmosphere but her current duties cannot be satisfied on the island. Therefore, she felt that she must go back to her husband's house in Bombay is must. The current

reality cannot be continued in the Manori of her past. She grasps the anxieties of the contemporary life with calmness.

Sita was fed up with the dreariness of life in Mumbai and hence makes this journey to Manori Island. During her stay on the island, she comes to know about her disenchantment with her immediate environments. She understands the reality on the island that has tempted her to make this return voyage. She comprehends the contradictory forces that exist between her and her kids:

*“They had no memory of its past glamour, and so she and they moved always in opposite direction”<sup>41</sup>*

She realizes the vainness and emptiness of her actions. Her stay on the island not only assists her to discover her old delights but also aids her to reunite herself to the enigmatic past and future worries. Sita discovers a harmonization between her interior state and her exterior self. The island offers her a sense of belongingness, as if she were back in her mother’s earnest and well-protected womb. Sita’s coziness provides her an aptitude to see inside herself, her innermost person ensuing in empowering her to look out, to look beyond herself. She becomes aware of her responsibility and duty.

Sita takes a bold step of going back to the miracle island and there she recognizes her blunder, overcomes the father fixation, and comes back to the mainland with her husband and children to fulfill her responsibilities and commitments. By doing so, she made no negotiations with the responsibilities, with the burdens and necessities of the husband and children.

### **3.3.3 Husband wife Relationship**

Anita Desai in this novel chooses marital dissonance as the theme of novel. There is a focus on the incapability of a wife to express spontaneously her dread and agony. It results in the breaking of communication between husband and wife. The distance between the husband Raman and the wife Sita swells because of difference of outlooks, fears and individual multiplexes. It results in their marital disharmony. Raman and Sita have incompatible natures and attitudes towards life. The incongruous couple of Raman and Sita are encountered with the problem of husband-



wife discord. Sita embodies a world of passion and female responsiveness while Raman is a man with practical view of life. Sita is anxious, delicate middle-aged woman with quick-temper and emotional reactions to many trifle things that happen to her. She always desires to escape reality and does not want to grow up and face the responsibilities of married life. On the contrary, Raman embodies rationality, prudence and an acceptance of the norms and values of society. He is not able to recognize Sita's violent reaction against every incident. His response to Sita's recurrent upsurges is a blend of bewilderment, exhaustion and dread. He cannot comprehend her boredom, her frustration.

Along with marital discord, there is the theme of alienation and lack of communication in married life - the theme of her first novel. But, here, the treatment is more controlled. Here, the wife's loneliness is the loneliness of the woman, wife and a mother. It is conditioned by the society and family. The childless Maya's anxiety is existential and temporal; Sita's ache is domestic and temporal. Sita is tired of the ordinary routine of worthless survival. She feels smothered in her refined, grand flat in Bombay. Therefore she fights to release herself away from it. The calmest way is open to her is to go to Manori island, her first home. She wishes to recapture some of her past. She escapes to the island in order not to give birth to her fifth child.

Sita is also preoccupied and despondent with her unhappy marriage with Raman. She is bored with her married life. Sita fails to understand that even after so many years of their marriage Raman is not able to recognize the reality of Sita's mind. In fact, he should have understood the restlessness of Sita's mind and her expectations from him. As Raman fails to understand this, she becomes upset. It makes her to grasp the hollowness of their married life. There is mal-adjustment between husband and wife. It is grounded on the clash of ethics, beliefs and even trust. It is perhaps grounded on dual societal morals. Therefore, the famous researcher, Uma Bannerjee precisely says that:

*“This is not simply a case of an emancipated woman, revolting against the slavish bonds of marriage. It is much more than that.”<sup>42</sup>*

Sita's psychosis springs from the dismal, boring everyday routine life, which repudiates her any wisdom of energetic participation. Nothing of interest and miraculous is happening in their life. Therefore, she is bored with it. The same things and acts are being repeated in their life. She feels that their life has become static one. She wants to have dynamic life. Hence, she regretfully says:

*"Life had no periods, no stretches. It simply swirled around, muddling and confusing, leading nowhere."*<sup>43</sup>

She becomes actually conscious of what she was missing in life after witnessing the tender scene in the magical island where she had spent her childhood with her father. When she saw a young woman being tenderly caressed by a man, she suddenly becomes aware of what she was missing in life. The maladjustment of the marriage had changed her completely. She becomes aware that she has misplaced her feminine self, her confidence in giving birth.

Later on, it became improbable for her to make any compromise. Hence she escaped to the idealistic land where she had spent a pleasant childhood with her father. She has lost her mental balance and resultantly it has endangered her rationality. She doesn't want to deliver the fifth baby and hopes that the magic land of her childhood i. e. Manori will give her the power to prevent the child birth. But when she comes to the island she finds that the island has lost its power. She discovers that her infancy imaginings has been vanished from that island. Therefore, she finds that time has made its negative impact there also – on the place and its people.

Raman is a business minded, practical headed and bent with the responsibilities of life that he takes so seriously. His expectations are ordinary and sensible. He is puzzled at the irrational behaviour of Sita. He is considerate and tries his best to make her happy. Raman's is a conventional Hindu family. In his family even men do not smoke amenably, however, Sita, just to malice the in-laws smokes amenably. Things become really unscrupulous, so Raman moves to a flat to avoid daily tensions. But, even here, Sita is not happy. Raman is at a loss to understand the reason of her boredom. He thinks himself a devoted benefactor of the family. He does not take subtle difference between physical union and union of souls as significant part of his life. He fails to comprehend the vibrant necessities of Sita. This leads to

making them as strangers. They are living under the same roof but find it difficult to share the essential communion of hearts.

Sita finds herself estranged from her husband and children. She remains an ignored personality since childhood. She is the product of broken family. She craves for the consideration and affection from others. When she was in her father's house she could not get it because her father remained busy with his chelas and patients. Even after marriage, she remains lonely. Her husband also is busy. He fails to fulfill her expectation. As a result, there is marital discord, tension, disharmony and communication gap between husband and wife.

### **3.3.4 Feminine sensibility**

Anita Desai has presented Sita's feminine sensitivity along with other factors which lead the psychosomatic battle in her. The novel is a very delicate and deft study of women sensibility. The novelist reveals the extraordinary inner life of its female protagonist, Sita. The novelist has magnificently drawn a very interesting and complex portrait of Sita.

Sita lives in the metropolitan city, Mumbai. She is the mother of four kids. She is pregnant for the fifth time. When her fifth child is on the way she feels that there is a strange loneliness, restlessness and boredom in her existence. She also feels that no one cares for her as an individual. On the other hand, she all of a sudden becomes stubborn and opposes the birth of a child in her womb. She knows the joy of motherhood and is moderately satisfied. But this time she doesn't want to give birth to the fifth baby. She is dissatisfied with the present surrounding and modern town culture and life style. She finds modern life full of violence and commotion. She wants to live a life of idealistic purity. She turns her back from materialism, commercialism, violence and ugliness. Moreover, her husband, Raman, does not understand and pay attention to her feelings. Her children engage themselves in such activities, which are disliked by her. There are lots of things that disturb her. Her husband's indifference, the quarrels between cook and her ayah, ayahs quarreling on the streets and Menaka's behavior all of these spoil her mental equilibrium. Her female sensitiveness is disturbed by all these and she begins to react violently to the surroundings. It causes the psychological conflict in her mind. She feels alienated

from Raman as well as her children. Therefore, she takes a decision to leave Bombay and take refuge in her utopian island Manori. She wants to save her fifth baby from hustle and bustle of Bombay. In this connection a scholar, M. A. Waheed comments:

*“Sita is estranged from her husband and children because of her emotional reactions to the incidents that occur to her in society.”*<sup>44</sup>

Sita is a woman over forty. She is married to a prosperous businessman, Raman. She finds herself estranged from her husband and children. She suddenly realizes that she has been living a rather ordinary life. Raman, her husband is busy, practical and indifferent to her. They are leading rather unhappy married life. They are erratically opposite to each other. Sita is haunted by the tedium and monotony of married life. She is disgusted with her life, with her husband and his friends. Sita adopts escape as the strategy of survival. She thinks that the members of her husband’s society lead lives of boredom and dullness. And it is impossible for her to be one of them. She thinks they are nothing. In her opinion they are “*appetitive*” and “*sex*”.<sup>45</sup>

The incident of eagle-crows fight reveals extreme feminine sensibility of Sita. One day from the balcony of her flat she sees that some crows are attacking on an eagle. The eagle is striving to save itself from the attack of crows. She immediately tries to save eagle from crows. She herself goes into the house and fetches the toy gun and shots it at crows. However, unfortunately she couldn’t save it. Next morning, Raman while drinking his tea says to her, “*They’ve made a good job of your eagle.*”<sup>46</sup> Though she is sure that eagle might not have flown away, she replies to him that “*perhaps it flew away.*”<sup>47</sup>

This incident unquestionably discloses Sita’s female susceptibility. It symbolizes her fight with her life partner as well as her battle for dominion at a deeper emotional level. At this time, the researcher observes that eagle stands for Sita as well as crows stand for Raman. Allegorically, Sita’s anxious attempt to protect the eagle from the attack of the crows could be seen as her battle against the male-controlled values represented by her partner, Raman.

Being tired of monotonous life in Bombay, she is very eager to go to Manori. She does not want to live in her husband’s unfriendly and deceitful world. Therefore,

she hastily packs and leaves for Manori Island. Finally she comes back to her father's magical island. Her lonesomeness is accustomed by culture as well as kinfolk. She feels that there is no challenge in her life. She is also not able to endure the annihilation around her. She finds it difficult to cope up with the contented but monotonous life.

Through the portrait of Sita, the novelist highlights the psychosomatic drives, obstruction, and sense of disappointment and keen awareness of the uselessness of survival. Turning inward the novel deals with the imperceptible truths of life. It dives deep into the deepest depths of woman mind to gauge its secrecies, the internal chaos. It narrates the predicaments in the tenacious opposition between marriage and self-fulfillment.

Sita's journey to the island along with her son Karan and daughter Menaka is a journey to her past, to her childhood. However, she feels as much as outsider here as she was in Bombay. She realizes that due to lack of friends and motherly love in her childhood, she kept herself completely absorbed in the natural surroundings of the island. She is dissatisfied to see everything changed on the island. She is deprived of a 'mother-image' in her life. Although a mother of four children, she withdraws completely from them. Her withdrawal from the world outside reaches the limits of illogicality and implausibility. It can be seen in her wish to keep the baby unborn. However, the life at the island does not provide her a sense of security, assurance or loving parental attention for which she had come there. Moreover, her idealism has no place in the practical world of her own children Karen and Menaka. Hence she feels that she has been betrayed even by her own children.

The female protagonist, Sita psychologically collapses when she comes to know that Raman has not come to Manori to take them to Mumbai on his own. She also comes to know that Menaka, their daughter has called him to help her to Mumbai because she wants to seek admission in the medical college. The circumstance in which Sita is placed is the clear indication of lonesomeness of a woman, a spouse, a mother. It is forced separation. It is forced by her family and community that she lives in. Her psychological dilemma is the consequence of war that is fought in her mind. The war is between the deceitful community and her innate uprightness. She loses her feminine self and changes from a normal wife and mother into all feminine self-lost

human being. She has lost all female, all sensible moralities in childbearing and also confidence in it. She begins to fear it as one more deed of ferocity and killing.

Sita's marriage to Raman was also not settled through proper understanding and love between them. She was married to Raman, the son of her father's friend Deedar, after her father's demise. Deedar had agreed this wedding ritual more out of sympathy than for affection to the prospects of Sita. She herself admits that Deedar's son has married to out of pity and out of lust. She also marries him because he has taken care of her after her father's death. She is sent to college, admitted in the college hostel by Raman's family. It clearly shows that marriage between Sita and Raman has not been founded on the solid base. Their marriage is based not on the solid base as it was based on compromise from both sides.

There is marital discord between Sita and Raman. It results from the clash between the two. She notices that her husband pays too much attention to his business. He does not value her feelings. In fact Raman is very considerate and does everything for Sita but unfortunately Sita does not understand it. Hence, Sita finds her life dull and monotonous. She expects Raman to be the life lover, making her realize how valuable she is to him. Raman however fails to fulfill her wishes. Raman centers his dynamisms on his business and becomes an escapist. He has his own ideologies, ethics, and own values. Thus, the temperaments of Sita and her husband remain opposite to each other.

Sita is an ignored personality since her childhood. Her unusual childhood, stricken with deprivation, doubt and despair, has had a negative impact upon her mind. It is the cause of her alienation from her husband, society and family. She is the product of a broken family. Her mother had left her father and had gone to Banaras. Therefore, she was deprived of mother's love in her childhood. She yearns to have the attention and love of others, but her father remains busy with his disciples and patients. There are many things that happen to cause a devastating effect on her mind. Her father's favoritism towards her half-sister, and the detection about her father that he is a bogus and deceitful, the finding of a half-sister, her mother's departure to Banaras have a devastating effect upon her psyche. She feels imprisoned within these suspicions and fights to seek freedom from them. All these have their impact on her and resultantly, she turns into an oversensitive and downhearted woman. She also

develops certain element of mental irrationality. She turns to be a distrustful personality. She becomes a cripple without supports. She is like a bird that frightens at the smallest amount of sound. She responds in an uncommon way and grieves from maltreatment. She develops a lasting dread that there is opposition about her. There is a clash between the sensitive individual and the narrow-minded world around her.

### **3.3.5 Revolt against tradition and social norms**

Sita is rebellious and non-conformist woman. She is disgusted by male-controlled norms. She tries to liberate herself from it. She is a new woman. She does not like to be confined within the four walls of her house. She is expected to behave as an ideal wife and mother. She does not like it.

After her marriage, Sita begins to live in the house of her husband's parents. It is a joint family and the members of that family are willing to accept even such a contemptible stranger like Sita. But Sita finds everyone filthy and domestic life intolerable. She thinks that they are incapable of introspection and have no inwardness and capacity for self-analysis which are the emblems of an authentic existence. To challenge them, to smash their satisfaction, and to shock them into recognition of the actuality, Sita behaves provocatively. She starts smoking and begins *“to talk in unexpected rushes of emotion, as while flinging darts at their flat, uninjured faces”*.<sup>48</sup> Sita also alienates herself from society. In reality in Indian culture a joint family has got much importance. But to live in a joint family the members of it have to sacrifice and compromise and adjust with each other. These are the backbones of Indian joint family structure. Sita couldn't do that. She is insolent, supercilious and has unadjusting nature therefore Raman, her husband, decides to live in a separate flat with her. This behavior of Sita in one sense is act of breaking Indian tradition.

Sita is disobedient and non-conformist, contemporary woman. She is disgusted by patriarchal norms and traditional values. She tries to liberate herself from them. She disapproves of being confined within the four wall of her house. She also does not like the expected behavior of an ideal mother and wife. Sita being highly emotional, sensitive, intellectual and freedom loving, finds it very difficult to accept the role assigned to her. Thus, she protests against it and carves a niche of her own. For that she escapes to her desired utopian land of island of “MANORI”. She goes

there in search of an independent female status not controlled by male counterparts and free from patriarchal bondage. She wants herself to be a woman as an independent existential being.

The female protagonist, Sita is extremely emotive, penetrating and short-tempered female. Raman's friends used to visit his house however they used to discuss about their trades, dealings and nothing else which Sita never liked. Sita thought them to be commercial minded. She is brave enough to register her complaint against it. She does not like compromise. Therefore she is of the opinion that all humanoid links are farcical. They are not true. Everybody has to compromise and she is not exception to that. She has been compromising in her marital life all the time. But now it has become difficult for her to compromise. She herself states that:

*"It all became harder than ever before, for me – very hard – this making compromises. Often one didn't want to compromise."*<sup>49</sup>

Her revolt represents an intelligent sensitive woman's revolt against the male barbarism crushing all finer values of life. She accepts the surrender or compromise as the survival strategy. But it is not her willful surrendering. The society, in which she lives, rather compels her to give up her principles and compromise with the situation. Sita tries to revolt against the traditional male domination. She tries to escape from the crowded city life and brings up her son Karan and her daughter Menaka on the lonely island of Manori. But she finds herself helpless when she finds that they are unwilling to live on that lonely island and cannot leave busy Bombay life. This helplessness makes Sita more miserable and takes her to the psychic imbalance. She finds herself like a captive bird who tries to escape, but unfortunately cannot. Her attempts to free herself from prison of her husband's house are fruitless. Her desire to live a free life has been crushed. She becomes aware that her principles have no place in the practical world of her husband, Raman.

Sita is reticent and sensitively active. She could never accept the supremacy of other members of the family. Instead she likes to dominate over other members. She even wants and tries to dominate. As per Indian culture a daughter-in-law has to respect her in-laws and husband. But Sita's case is exactly opposite to that. She takes to smoking and behaves roughly with others. Therefore society does not like her but



she is not ready to mend her behavior. Resultantly, she remains isolated and lives in seclusion.

Sita's resorting to smoking cigarettes may be seen as a sign of revolt as well as of expression of self. It may be taken as an effort to be herself and to demonstrate the world that she has an individuality of her own and basically she is a person. The truth is that it is a sign of disintegration. She attempts to be disorderly before Raman shows her fundamental wish. She wants to ascertain that she is not going to care for those in a world who do not care for her. This is the chief reason of their conjugal disharmony but Raman could never comprehend it. Sita's outpourings against the social order, her monotony are only disguised to hide her weakening strength from the world. In the course of time all the harms and apprehensions of her heart enhance in measurement. This is parallel to other female protagonists of Anita Desai as Sita also take herself away from everybody, but she remains as agitated as a feathered friend in a confine. She is not at reconciliation with herself. It is immaterial whether she is in Mumbai or in Manori.

Sita is a traumatized and unfulfilled woman who feels locked in the tedium of her house and conjugal life. While Raman is a normal man with a practical rational attitude to life, Sita is a woman who gets upset straightforwardly and lacks the capacity to adjust with her family and society.

Finally, Sita successfully finds the answer to her question as to Where Shall We Go This Summer. The answer is that she should return to her husband's house, to the society and to succumb to the demands of life. Anita Desai novels are nothing but the reflections of Indian society. As per the Indian tradition, a wife has to live with her husband wherever he lives and has to surrender to all the conditions whatever they are. In the end, there is a change in Sita's mind and attitude and it is the sign of positive acceptance of life and Indian conventions. It is also the acceptance of the man-woman relationship in the traditional way. Sita learns the harsh truths of life and negotiates with it. Her coming back to her kinfolk does not represent her failure. On the other hand, it displays her valor and endurance to face the ups and downs of life. Moreover, it shows Sita's determination to sustain and support conventional values of a unified life in the face of messy values of modern metropolitan civilization.

Towards the end of the novel, Sita is willing to negotiate her liberty. She admits assertion of life and compromise. She comes back to her husband's house with a sense of rehabilitated consciousness. She understands that reality, however painful, needs to be tolerated. It is better to live with it than escaping to deceptive fantasy world that Manori stands for.

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## CHAPTER IV

### Sexual Dilemma in Shashi Deshpande's Female Protagonists

#### 4.1 Introduction:

Shashi Deshpande is one of the well-known feminist of the present-day time. She has created her own space in the literary world. She writes about the issues of Indian women. She also narrates how these modern women try to sustain their equilibrium between the two ways of living i.e. traditional and modern. Her famous novels, *That Long Silence* (Sahitya Akadami Award Winning novel), and *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (Nanjangad Thirumalamba Award Winning) deal with the social issues that contains individuality of the modern and educated female protagonists. She also advocates liberation of the woman characters but not at the cost of Indian culture about marriage system.

As a novelist, Shashi Deshpande's speciality lies in her truthful depiction of life of women in particular. She successfully makes an attempt to explore the innermost being of these modern women who are at the crossroads between convention and modernism. She convincingly depicts the quandary of these sophisticated women who are struggling between the long-standing conventional values, imposed on them right from their birth and the contemporary viewpoint they acquired of late from their learning. Their condition seems to be worse than their past counterparts and those of present who still believe in these customs and traditions to which they submit themselves without any hesitation. They are unable to dispose of these conventional ethics at once and adopt the principles they acquired a fresh. Majority of her fiction echoes quandaries and fights of this kind of females.

Shashi Deshpande never created her female protagonists bigger than life. She always believed in representing her female characters as they are. They are never stronger or greater than actual women. Her female protagonists are neither radical in nature nor panic-stricken. Rather they are average women trapped in certain circumstances. These circumstances compel them to introspect and retrospect their bygone life. After retrospection, most of her female protagonists understand that they

themselves are responsible for their condition, their suffering. They also learn the lesson that instead of blaming the society or the male-controlled culture for their destiny, they should blame themselves. They themselves are responsible for their suffering.

Shashi Deshpande's protagonists know that women are exploited and subjugated at various levels in the masculine construct. They also know that patriarchy has double standard ethical, societal, racial and spiritual codes. They work against women as a group. They are well aware that patriarchy muddles them and limits their rights. Therefore, they sturdily denounce the overbearing scheme of patriarchy. They know that the patriarchy doesn't allow them to grow as individuals. In this culture of male supremacy, longing for male child still continues. Even today baby girls are not welcome. Moreover in some parts of the country female infanticide is still a common practice. The novelist through her novels challenges the prevailing double standard code of conduct of the society that has different gauges for men and women.

Shashi Deshpande female protagonists do not represent or stand for conventional 'Sita' or 'Savitri' or 'Draupadi' images. They are the 'new women'. They are like the overflowing rivers that find a passageway into cracks and holes. The female protagonists of the two novels here under study are primarily escapees. First they find themselves in the domestic, professional and erotic traps and then look for retreat to escape from these traps. But unfortunately each retreat whatever it is turns out to be another trap for them. It doesn't allow them to enjoy their freedom or seek their identity. Rather they are deprived of them and make them suffer.

Shashi Deshpande's female protagonists in their parental families also were unable to comply with the familial relations. It was so because their parental families belong to the conventional, male-controlled middle class. As a result they experience restlessness and even detestation towards their mothers. They consider their mothers as controlling and tyrannical persons. However, they don't submit their mothers they go against their mothers' desires. They try to leave their maternal houses either for learning or for wedding. For them fathers become the source of support or even encouragement. Saru of *The Dark Holds No Terror* and Jaya of *That Long Silence*

views marriage as a seepage way. Through marriage they attempt to liberate themselves from the unpleasant atmosphere in their parental house but unfortunately they find themselves in another trap of suffocation in the in-laws house. They marry against their parents' wish. It can be viewed as their rebellion against their mums who stand for patriarchy.

Shashi Deshpande's female protagonists can be viewed as erotic prodigals because they challenge the tradition through their sexual acts. However, their resorting to extra-marital relations does not succeed and also does not take them out of their quandaries. Both of them Saru and Jaya instead of confronting the problem suspend it. But when it becomes intolerable they share it with either with some friend or relatives to save themselves from it.

## ***4.2 That Long Silence***

### **4.2.1 Image of woman**

Jaya, the female protagonist, of *That Long Silence* belongs to the old-fashioned, conformist family. She is cultured, middle-class smiling, docile, devoted woman. She has the innate strength of character but is stifled due to rigid outmoded powers. Jaya represents the Indian wife and expresses the silence of Indian wife. After marriage, she learns to overpower her own desires and behave according to her husband's, Mohan's desire. She cannot dare to protest and thus says:

*"I had learnt it at last no questions, no retorts. Only silence."*<sup>1</sup>

In the course of time, she finds herself caught between submission and assertion. It seems that she is a satisfied housewife who is married to an apparently considerate man. It also appears that there is no scarcity of material comfort. But the fact is that Jaya has systematically suppressed every aspect of her personality. She has tried her level best to refuse everything in her personality that did not fit in with the image of a wife and a mother and also for a failed writer.

Jaya and Suhasini are the two names of the female protagonist. Her father has given her the name of 'Jaya' which means triumph. After marriage her husband gave her the name of 'Suhasini' which means good housewife. Therefore her husband



Mohan presumes her to match her conduct to the meaning of the word 'Suhasini. He does not like to call her by the name Jaya. Mohan tells her that he chose that name for her. This reflects Mohan's expectation from her. Jaya thinks that the role models of the past are irrelevant to the present situation and hence does not like to follow them. She, being compelled by the evil necessity of married life, continues to live with Mohan. Jaya considers herself to be like Kusum, a distant relative or Jeeja, a poor maid servant trapped in their self created silence, apprehension and submission. They remain so because they thought it would enable them to lead smooth and peaceful life. Mohan and Jaya have to move to their Dadar flat for unavoidable reasons. When they come to Dadar flat, Jaya compares themselves to the two bullocks yoked together.

*"A pair of bullocks yoked together.....that was how i saw the two of us the day came here."*<sup>2</sup>

Jaya is not happy to leave their luxurious house and move into a small flat at Dadar with her two children. Therefore, there in that flat a long silence grows between them and it results into unhappy and unsteady marital life. Jaya feels very angry when Mohan admits that he accepted bribe for Jaya and her children. But she was not able to express her anger or her resentment. She decides to remain silent and not to give way to her anger but to tolerate it. In fact this is the characteristic of traditional woman who used to sacrifice everything of her own for her husband. Jaya goes through rebellion followed by separation from family. Jaya tries to prove by taking different stands that woman expects only love and respect from both families and not inferior or subjugated or subordinate position in life.

Jaya, the female protagonist of the novel is not only a well-read woman but also having boon of literary sensibility. She is nurtured in silence that corresponds with her fictional role. She is a modern, convent-educated, fluent-English speaking woman and a creative writer. She represents the promising new woman conscious of her position in the society. She leads seventeen years of troubled life in silence. Then she writes her story unfolding her feelings. She also relates incidents of ups and downs that caused her misery and dissatisfaction, and endangered her life. She starts her novel by saying that she is not writing a story of a cold-hearted, unfeeling husband

and a sensitive suffering wife. She is writing of both. She has been born and brought up in such a family in which she could develop her personality under the extravagance of her father. She was educated in an English medium school. Her father named her 'Jaya' that means 'victory.' Her father had very high opinion about her and hence he did everything possible for him to inspire her and always kept on telling her that she is not like others. Unfortunately, her father died of heart attack before she completes her graduation.

She had not friendly relationship with her mother. Her mother often used to oppose her father. The death of her father at an early age was a great blow to her career. Her mother hardly felt the death of her husband and therefore Jaya opted to stay in the hostel rather than with her mother. Jaya is perplexed and disliked her mother's careless attitude. Jaya's mother immediately forgets her twenty years of life with her husband in Saptagiri and goes to Ambegaon, her parental home.

Jaya's decision to marry Mohan is an outcome of her rebelliousness against her mother and her desire to be free from the control of filial home. Mohan also prefers to marry Jaya because he wants to marry a well-educated and cultured girl. He wants to marry girl who can speak good English. He feels that she can understand him and support him better way to lead a quiescent and happy life. He is not concerned about conventional formalities of marriage. Jaya's comes to know from her brother that Mohan wants an educated and cultured wife.

When Mohan saw Jaya speaking English fluently, he immediately decided to marry her. After marriage, she performs her household duties nicely. She is also a writer and writes lifelike stories for the newspapers and magazines. In her stories, she deals with man-woman relationship which is appreciated by everybody including Mohan. The readers and editors appreciate her stories. She wins a prize for one such story in which she depicts a man who reaches out to his wife only through her body. Jaya is a middle class heroine who is seen to experience a conflict in her mind when faced with contemporary modern ways of life and the pulls of tradition. Jaya, after a lot of soul searching, thrash out her personal problems in her own way. By depicting her inner turmoil, the novelist is pointing to the influence of western trends of thought on Jaya who is aware of herself as individual.

The novelist, through Jaya reveals the attitude that marriage and motherhood constrict the life of women. She is against the institutionalization of marriage and motherhood. Education also becomes a handicap for an average housewife. This is due to the fact that education and intelligence make a woman think more and question moral values. In the process of their introspection, all the thinking heroines of the novelist start questioning traditional Indian values. This reveals the author's questioning attitude. When once aware of her individuality, a woman cannot adhere to conventional societal norms as she used to before the awakening of the feminist consciousness in her. The novelist is worried about a housewife who never leaves her house for work or anything else. She is most dedicated and literally confined. Shashi Deshpande, in an interview with Vanamanala Viswanathan explains that her compassions lie with the housewife:

*"Most women are still emotionally dependent on the family -they want to be good daughters/wives/mothers always."*<sup>3</sup>

Shashi Deshpande feels pity for most middle class women as they wish to be recognized by established relationships. She is of the view that woman must proclaim her individuality. She must try to know herself instead of being only wife, daughter or mother. She feels that when woman attaches more significance to being acknowledged as wife or mother, she tries to perform most difficult task of being known as a model, perfect wife or mother. According to Deshpande, it wipes out one's makeup and she ceases to be an individual. The result of this is woman turns out to be very reliant on the benevolence of others. She becomes destitute and is afraid of displeasing others, particularly her husband. Through Jaya, the novelist presents the image of a model, faultless woman. At the time of marriage, Mohan Jaya's husband changes her name to Suhasini. However, the change of name implied the change in behaviour and personality of Jaya. Therefore, Jaya says:

*"...Who was distinct from Jaya, a soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman ... A woman who coped?"*<sup>4</sup>

Once, the female protagonist, Jaya become more conscious about her position, she discards her name which symbolizes her fight to the stereotype that is imposing on every female in Indian society. She also emphasizes various examples which are

also highlighted on the inferior status of female. For instance, the sharp separation of roles of female in the Mohan's residence; where all uninteresting works like cooking as well as cleaning are done only by female and Mohan's father's unwell condition of his wife when she has not prepared the chutney to his taste when he comes home very late; the futile drunkard husband of Jeeja's daughter-in-law who brazenly lives off his mother's and wife's salary and beats his wife; the plight of Kusum who becomes foolish at the using of bad language by her in-laws. Thus, the researcher thinks that such situation may have averted if the female in question asserted for their rights. But in all these cases the women choose to suffer in quietness. By speaking out about their plights, by voicing their anguish, Ms. Deshpande has taken the first step towards their freedom. She wishes that by sarcastically pointing out their weakness through her tales, such women who undergo in their silence will be urged to fracture their long calm. She does not advocate a total dismissal of Indian cultural standards that include wifhood and manage and requirement towards relations. Although, inside the structure of the domestic set up, she urges women to come across a way to declare them to become free from the burden of domesticity as well as hard work.

By making the failed author Jaya affirms that she would write about what she wanted to and not what her husband Mohan wanted to, novelist is describing the situation where the educated individual moves into creative space. Her female protagonists become the vehicles on whom the novelist burdens her thoughts about the conditions for a female's emancipation in the Indian circumstance.

At the beginning of the novel *That Long Silence*, the novelist makes her female protagonist reveal only that side of herself that her husband wanted to see. But later she realises that such fragmentation of their self is not possible. She cannot deny part of her own self. Her husband has to accept her whole self – not only her domesticated self but also the rebellious and unconventional self. The female protagonist, Jaya and her image becomes like that of a bird that has got wings and knows that it may soar, but, somehow, does not. In the same way, she is conscious of her abilities and she knows that she may expose them honestly, but some way, she does not. She always remains silent which indicates that the traditional roles of female still have pre-eminence over all the newly-obtained professional roles.

#### 4.2.2 Jaya's Quest for Self-identity

The novel consists of four sections and each section deals with a different stage of Jaya's conjugal life. In the first section, Jaya and Mohan have just come to their Dadar flat. Mohan is accused of malpractices in the office and he is compelled by his senior to remain in hiding for some days. At Dadar flat their routine is not same as their Churchgate flat. It was upset. This is the point from where the course of Jaya's self-identity begins. In the second section, Jaya as a true Indian housewife is attempting to mould herself according to Mohan's wishes and preferences. In the third section, Mohan leaves Jaya and the house in anger and she gets time to ponder over her marital life. Then it dawns to her that she is nonentity without her husband. she doesn't have any identity. She is unknown in the eyes of the people as well as in her own eyes. In the fourth section, the course of self-realization of Jaya is complete. But sheer self-realization is not adequate. Therefore, Jaya energies herself further and becomes indomitable "*to erase the silence between us*".<sup>5</sup>

At Dadar flat, Jaya has no that much work to do as the Churchgate flat. The children are on a trip. They are the two in the house. Therefore, cooking, washing and cleaning for herself and Mohan are the only works she has to do. She gets freedom from everyday chore and finds some time to think about Mohan, her children and her family. She also contemplates about herself. Her thinking hints her to distance herself from her husband first, then her children and finally from her own 'self'. It helps her to look at the whole thing in a peaceful, serene and disconnected way. Jaya first realizes that Mohan has become the axis of her life and her life moves around him. Mohan is in hiding, therefore, he does not have his regular busy schedule. As both of them are without work, she senses that her career as a housewife is at peril. She says:

*"My own career as a wife was in jeopardy."*<sup>6</sup>

She faces a sort of emptiness. She realizes that up to this point she has led a life of woman who has consumed all her time in the household doings. However, now she is without work. Therefore, she finds a lot of free time to ponder. She recalls what was there in their home at Churchgate. She attempts to try to find out how and why they have bought all those things. She also realizes that Mohan has a clear idea of what he wants and of the kind of house he would like, and so on. She is just an inert

supporter of him. She has acted as if she is without mind and also is without any likings.

She is well accustomed to this from her childhood. Hence, now she finds it difficult to lead her life independently and according to her desire. In her childhood, being female child she was not supposed to ask questions and if she asked any question then elders in her parental house were very concerned about her future. She is told by her grandmother that no husband approves of a question and a retort from wife. No husband can be comfortable with it. Now, when she is matured and married, she realizes that even not having any questions or retorts does not lead to pleasant associations. She expresses her grief:

*“I had neither any questions nor any retorts for Mohan now and yet there was no comfort.”<sup>7</sup>*

Jaya’s schedule at Churchgate flat was very busy one. Therefore, she could not realize the deficiency of communication between Mohan and herself. But at Dadar flat, their daily routine has been totally changed. She has lot of leisurely time to think. Resultantly, she ponders and recognises the fact that there is gap of communication between them. She experiences a sort of emptiness after making love to each other. Before shifting to Dadar, Mohan’s life was also busy life but at Dadar as he has no office work he became restless and began to disgust waiting. He severely grumbles that waiting makes him depressed. Because of this Jaya is able to understand the dissimilarity between her own life as a wife and Mohan’s life. It dawns to her that from the marriage day, she is waiting, waiting and waiting. She is waiting for everything and everybody. She has been waiting for Mohan to come, for the children to be born and so on and so forth.

*“Waiting for Mohan to come home, waiting for the children to be born, for them to start school.....”<sup>8</sup>*

In fact, waiting is the destiny of woman. It begins right from early in childhood and it continues throughout her life. Jaya, the female protagonist is not exception to that. Jaya before marriage was told by Vanitamami that a husband is like a sheltering tree. She realizes that her life has become so Mohan-centred that in the

development, she has lost her distinct 'self'. Thus in the first section of the novel the researcher observes that the course of separation from others and search for self on Jaya's part has begun. In this process, she has learnt that there is the emptiness in their lives. She has also learnt that she has lived her life on the material and corporeal level with her husband, Mohan.

Then Jaya tries to adjust herself and her life to Mohan's life. She understands that Mohan is born and brought up in paucity. Therefore, now he is in search of an ease and extravagance of life. As a result, he tries to transfer in the purchase section where he can pamper in misconducts. However, Jaya in spite of having knowledge of this chooses to be still. She never advises Mohan in this matter. The reason is that she also has a fascination for comfy life. Therefore, she closes her eyes to the happenings and fantasizes to see nothing. She says *"I didn't want to know anything."*<sup>9</sup> In this way, Jaya chooses for a comfy life and overlooks Mohan's misconducts. However, when Mohan gets into difficulty, she agonisingly understands the triviality and emptiness of her choice to ignore and blind herself to Mohan's misbehaviour in his office.

Then Jaya becomes strong-minded and tries to find out what wrong has gone during all these years of marriage with her. Therefore, she takes out and goes through her diaries. She feels that it will give her a real picture of her own self. After having read the diaries, she comes to know that during these years she has entirely obliterated her 'self'. She also realizes that for that long period, she has lived only as Mohan's obedient and meek wife and her kids' mother and nothing else.

*"Mohan's wife. Rahul's and Rati's mother. Not myself."*<sup>10</sup>

She realizes that she had become very practical woman soon after her marriage. She also realizes that she has consumed her life on very trifle matters like everyday expenditures and the dates of maturity of life insurance policies etc. After reading the diaries she understands that the entries in diaries presented only a seeming level of her life. She fails to find the real woman. The woman who really has grieved the tedium of this life has suffered lot. She has overpowered the screams that she was unable to manage, unable to accomplish. She also realizes that she has become trivial and reticent because of her wedding with Mohan. It is because she depends on him

and overpowers her 'self'. She also lacks courage to assert. She now doesn't have her old self-assured self. It is very painful that she is unable to know when this process of change began.

*"I can remember a time when I was not so full of fears, when the unknown, when darkness and insects did not terrify me so. When did the process of change begin?"*<sup>11</sup>

Jaya has been nurtured in an ambience in which there is clear distinction between the roles for male and female. As women have fixed roles, in the same way men do have their fixed roles. Any misbehaviour is not only mocked but is even seriously protested. Once Jaya's cousins having bored with the drudgery of cleaning up after meals, propose that the boys do it, there is universal mocking hilarity. However, Jaya has clearly disremembered this childhood episode. Therefore, one day Jaya was ill and she asks Mohan to cook. Mohan is astonished and does not like it. In their further conversation, Jaya happens to make reference to his mother's cooking, Mohan feels insulted by this reference to his mother. It results in a quarrel between them. But Jaya thinks that such squabbles between them help her to know about Mohan's strong points and weaknesses. And it further helps her to adjust herself as per Mohan's strong and weak points. She is able to avoid the activities and her doings that upset him. She also tries to do only those things which satisfy him. However this practice causes Jaya to expense her self-identity.

For Mohan, his mother is an ideal woman. His mother is very obedient and therefore never raised a question or voice against her husband. She never got angry with her husband or anybody else. Jaya is expected to follow her mother-in-law. When Jaya recognises this, she mugs up to govern her irritation. She tries to follow what is womanly and what is not womanly that is what is manly. When she visits her in-laws, she comes to know that the woman's role is demarcated very severely. Therefore, she takes a decision to shape herself and her behaviour on the lines of women from Mohan's family and follows it honestly. This is the subsequent phase in her identification with her in-laws family members and Mohan. She says:

*"I would pattern myself after them."*<sup>12</sup>



Then Jaya reflects on her wedding. She notices that she was so innocent and had no clear idea about what she wanted in the man she was to marry. She was like other girls and she was looking for love. She had expected a good-looking young man in some way distant from all the real young men. However, very soon she comes to know that it was marriage waiting for her. It wasn't love for which she was looking. She marries Mohan however she had some concrete motives for marrying Mohan. The first was that she was bored at her parents' house and therefore she wanted to get away from it. She thought marriage with Mohan would provide her respite from Ambegaon. The other was that Mohan was not demanding any dowry. But in the course of time she realizes that it was not her choice to marry Mohan but it was Mohan's choice and she had only to give in.

After marriage, she has to depend on Mohan physically. Jaya considers that corporeal merging is the essence of their relationship. She yearns for his physical presence and voraciously reacts to his touch. She now wants to grip Mohan's consideration as a woman. For this, she does everything possible for her. She even reads women's magazines. She reads articles from them that guide her about how to maintain good relations with one's counterpart and how to be attract his attention. In order to attract Mohan, she tries to look beautiful. For that she combs her hair many times a day. She also puts various creams and applies various cosmetics on her face. She does all these things with the intention to keep Mahan feel attracted towards her. In spite of all this she doubts whether she succeeds in pleasing Mohan or not. However in the course of time, she matures and understands much more about the husband-wife relationship.

*"It was ridiculous, he would have slept with me faithfully twice a week whether I creamed my face or not..... Yet I had always been apprehensive of not pleasing him as a woman."*<sup>13</sup>

There is slow but sure turn in Jaya's dependence from physical towards emotional. She becomes more and more emotional and attached to Mohan therefore she begins to panic about Mohan's death. She feels that he might die. His demise seems to be the highest disaster to her. But as time passes Jaya's passions for Mohan diminish. The intensity of feelings also diminishes. However, Jaya's habit of being a

wife still continues and she cannot think of differing from Mohan. Thus at this stage Jaya is trying to cope with her husband, Mohan and become one with him. In her attempt, she is becoming more and more dependent on him substantially and fervently. However, she is losing her self-identity as she is trying to modify herself as per the wish of Mohan. After Mohan leaves Jaya in the third section of the novel, she realizes that it is difficult for her live without him. She experiences void in her life. She is not able to understand what she is without Mohan. In order to please Mohan and to become an ideal wife, Jaya has given up many things. She has tried her level best to mould herself as per the expectations of Mohan. However, in spite of all this, there is not congruence between herself and Mohan. Because Mohan blames her that she has never felt concern for him in her life. Therefore, she feels that if she was not concerned for Mohan then what she has been doing all these years. She is traumatized by Mohan's accusation.

When Mohan leaves home, Jaya feels that he has abandoned her. She feels that she has become crazy like Kusum. However, she is more sensible and attentive. Hence, she realizes the need for self-discipline. She does not wish to allow her mind to influence and finally ruin. She convinces herself that Mohan would come back. But as Mohan leaves her, she begins to feel remorseful. She also begins to feel that she is being punished for her sins. She is dreadfully agitated. Her restlessness makes her scrub the bathroom hard. The result is that the bristles of brush fall off. Anyhow she tries to overcome her restlessness and engage herself in some physical work.

When she thinks about her position in the family, she recalls her uncle Ramu Kaka. She recalls that he had prepared a family tree and her name was not there in that family tree. She had asked him about it and Ramu Kaka had told her that she did not belong to their family. However, she had also seen that the names of her grandmother and aunts were not included in that family tree. Therefore, she understands that she belongs neither to her father's family nor to her husband's family.

Once Kamat tells Jaya that her stories are nonaggressive and he advises her to express her annoyance in her story. Jaya tells him that no woman can be angry. She also asks him whether he has ever heard of an angry young woman. Then Jaya

remembers the reason for which she has stopped getting annoyed. In her childhood, nobody had taken her anger seriously. Mohan had also told her that to get annoyed is not good for woman. It makes her look unwomanly. From that day she has become a lifeless doll. She only knows how to look lovely and eye-catching and be submissive. Kamat advises her that she should take herself seriously and work. Then only others will take her seriously. However, Jaya thinks that it is her first duty to be Mohan's wife and his children's mother. She also thinks that she is subservient to Mohan and his children. She feels that she is safe and comfortable in being subservient to all of them. She has stopped writing to remain subordinate to them.

*“And so I had stopped writing. It hadn't been Mohan's fault at all.”*<sup>14</sup>

The final section of the novel unfolds how Jaya realizes that she has been bent as Mohan has left her. She also comes to know and that in the current circumstances she is not able relate her to the outer world. Moreover, her belief that she herself, Mohan and their children will create a happy family has already been devastated. In the last phase of the course of self-realization she recognizes that writing about her life has empowered her to cut off herself entirely from others as well as from herself. It has given her the power to look at her life disinterestedly. It is because of her disinterestedness, she could get a real picture of her own self. She has become a transformed individual. She is now indomitable to modify and improve herself.

Once, Jeeja's son meets with an accident. She requests Jaya to speak to the doctor so that the doctor would take more care of her son. It is because Jeeja feels that Jaya, being the wife of big officer, the doctor would listen to her. Then the doctor, who happens to be her brother's friend, calls her as Dinu's sister. She does not like to be referred like this. Therefore, she realizes that she doesn't have her separate identity other than Mohan's wife and Dinu's sister. Then one day her son Rahul who is staying with Ashok and Rupa in a hotel runs away from the hotel. She is shocked to know that. She is more shocked when Rati seems to be totally unaffected by the fact that her brother is missing, as she tells Jaya to send her new shoes. One more shock is waiting for her. It is that her son, Rahul declines to speak to her over the phone. All these events shatter her confidence. She is disappointed to see that her family, which she had thought to be integrated, is only a group of different individuals. They don't

have common pleasures and distresses. Jaya is stunned as well as disheartened to see that the unity among the family members which she had taken for granted has been gone.

All these incidents compel Jaya to wake up to the truth of life. She realizes that one cannot own anybody. Even one cannot own one's children. She was always under the impression that she is Rahul's and Rati's mother and Mohan's wife. However, she knows very little about her children. Her husband, Mohan accuses her for being negligent towards him. In such a situation, she cannot take the responsibility to be a mother and wife. She finds herself in a hopeless condition. One can sense her hopelessness when she tells Mukta:

*“Mukta I was so confident, so sure of myself, I felt so superior to others.....Kusum, yes, and you too.....and now, without Mohan, I'm.....I don't know, I don't know what I am.”<sup>15</sup>*

However, Jaya recalls Lord Krishna. He gives ultimate knowledge to his disciple, Arjuna and then asks him to choose as he wishes. Now, she has acquired the knowledge like Arjuna and she is ready to make the choice. She is indomitable to choose as per her desire. She resolves to be self-confident. She receives a telegram from Mohan. It informs her that all is well and he is coming on Friday. Jaya is sure that Mohan will be back. However, she resolves not to react as she previously used to react to Mohan. She is determined not to act and behave as per Mohan's dictates which she used to do up to now. However, she is determined to speak and erase the silence between them.

#### **4.2.3 Husband-wife relationship**

Jaya and Mohan are the husband and wife. They are married for last seventeen years. Though they are living together for last seventeen years in the same house and sharing the bed together, there is void in their bond. They are living like aliens to each other. Both of them fail to comprehend each other's feelings. They fail to understand each other's expectations, frustrations and disappointments. As a result living together turns out to be tough for both of them. Shashi Deshpande writes very symbolically about the relationship and married life of husband and wife i. e. Jaya and Mohan.

Mohan and Jaya are performing their duties as animals instinctively do it. They are united in conjugal life but are defaced by bilateral hatred and mistrust. The image of beasts imparts the message that there is lack of love in their relationship. It also communicates the superior creatures of earth i.e. human beings have become an animal and there is no commitment of love and affection between them.

Mohan is accused of malpractices in his office and is asked by his boss to remain in hiding for some days. It causes the polarity between husband and wife. After accusation of malpractices, Agarwal has warned Mohan about what is likely to happen, therefore, Mohan is apprehensive about the consequences. However, he feels that Jaya is not concerned about him and is indifferent towards him. He tries to tell Jaya that he has been going through torture and he is very much worried. But Jaya only laughs. From this it is clear that there is no congruence between the two. This divergence becomes very unpleasant in the course of time. In resentment Mohan goes to the extent of forsaking Jaya. This opposition causes misery to both Jaya and Mohan. Both of them feel tormented. The distress of Mohan finds manifestation in leaving his house and Jaya's distress finds manifestation in her words. This opposition has come into existence not because one of them has hurt the other or one of them wants to dispossess the other of some ownership. It has come into existence because they observe things in two different ways.

Jaya tries to examine the situation and finds that up to now she thought herself to be Mohan's wife but now she feels Mohan does not consider her his wife and has never considered her to be his wife. She also tries to examine Mohan's attitude and arrives at the conclusion that Mohan takes her for granted. She gives examples of Sita, Savitri and Draupadi. However it makes clear that she does not approve of the approaches of these women and wants to suggest that a modern woman must not be expected to behave like them. The very fact that Jaya describes this approach of Mohan with disapproval signifies that her perception of the husband and wife relationship is different from that of her husband. She does not approve of a wife's negating her personality and behaving like Sita, Savitri and Draupadi.

Husband-wife relationship is very important relationship. The marriage institution depends on it. Indian parents have typical mentality while bringing up their

daughters. It is very common practice in India that the girls are taught from their birth that the husband's home is a 'sheltering tree'. It is imbibed in their minds that there is no escape and after marriage she is bound to her husband for next seven births. Jaya is also brought up with this mentality by her parents. She is told by her Vinita Mami that she should accept her husband's every opinion without any grudge. She is also told that her husband's home is the 'sheltering tree for her'. Therefore, Jaya after marriage like an Indian other girls accepts the customary role of a house wife and performs her duties as wife. She stays at home, looks after the babies and maintains aloofness from the rest of the world. However, in the course of time, she feeds up with the regular works like changing the sheets, scrubbing bathrooms and cleaning the fridge and so on. One day, Jaya's story was published in the magazine. The readers and editors appreciated Jaya for her story. However, Mohan instead of appreciating her story, is worried that the people would take the couple in the story as he himself and Jaya. Therefore, she feels frustrated and she says:

*"For Mohan it had mattered that people think the couple was us, that the man him. To Mohan, been no writer, only an exhibitionist."*<sup>16</sup>

Jaya wants to use her creative power and write more stories but is unable to do it because of her husband. She is caught between her own desire and her husband's expectations. When Mohan asks her not to write, he seems to be exerting his superiority as the husband. But Jaya, being an educated girl, is not ready to accept the notion of the supremacy of the husband and reacts in silence. Mohan as the victim of superiority complex is unable to understand that there is no question of superiority or inferiority between husband and wife. In married life husband and wife need to play their respective roles and they need to love and respect each other. Equal status is must in married life.

There is inequality in the relationship of Jaya and Mohan. They are unable to understand that they should be more harmonizing to each other rather than enemies in the battle of life. As a result both of them suffer in the course of the novel. Mohan suffers from alienation when he finds himself caught in the case of mismanagement in his office. He feels acute sadness, suffocation and discontentment out of which he

leaves home. Certainly, his decision to leave home is not the correct, but he takes this decision because he feels that nobody supports him.

Mohan feels that Jaya should share his anxiety. He expects that his wife should comfort him in this crisis. However, Jaya remains silent, maintains aloofness and reacts differently. On the contrary, Jaya feels that Mohan has lost interest in her. Her decision to stop writing for the newspaper column 'Seeta' indicates that she has decided not to play the conventional role of a wife. Mohan tries to convince her to continue to write for the column which Jaya refuses. Jaya thinks that the search of happiness is worthless. She also thinks that isolation is the necessary situation of human life.

Jaya suppresses her own wants and ambitions and attempts to walk on the track of her mother-in-law. She lives as per the wish of her husband and her in-laws. She forms herself thus purposefully. She follows the wishes of her husband and in-laws very determinedly for last seventeen years. Resultantly, she forgets that she is a human being and has her own dreams and ambitions. Even she forgets her own 'self' and 'individuality'. Now, she is nobody without Mohan and she becomes the entity. She embodies the conventional notion of a perfect wife. She follows her husband blindly and never questions him or her in-laws. She bandages her eyes forcefully as Gandhari had bandaged her eyes to become blind like her husband. However, she regrets that Gandhari was called an ideal wife for her act whereas she is not called so.

Jaya's name was changed by Mohan at the time of marriage and she was named as Suhasini. After marriage, she tries her level best to become his better half. She offers Mohan everything possible as a traditional ideal wife and sacrifices everything for him. She provides a home and two children, Rati and Rahul. While sacrificing her everything for her husband she even sacrifices her own individuality. After marriage her aim is to live for her husband and she fulfils it successfully. In the process her self-identity is effaced and she gets the status of being only a wife of Mohan and mother of his children. Her individuality is lost. For last seventeen years she has been living only for her husband and after giving birth to children she has been living for her husband and her children. Her husband is everything for her. Her business, her vocation and her means of support are everything Mohan for her. Her

Mami's lesson that "a husband is like a sheltering tree" has become the integral part of Jaya's married life. She attempts throughout her marital life to value this principle. Her trust in Ramukaka and Vanitamami is so robust that she gives up her individualism and fights to keep her husband and her in-laws family contented. She considers it as the goal of her life. She sacrifices all her imaginings and ambitions. She shapes herself so that she would be able to fulfil Mohan's every wish and every obligation. She considers Mohan's all views and thoughts as if of her own. She admits and carries on the convention of adoration and consideration, muteness and patience. She walks on the path her mother-in-law and sister-in-law. She becomes a dedicated and loyal better half of Mohan and an affectionate, considerate, well-behaved and accountable mother to her children as well as obedient daughter-in-law to her mother-in-law. In her parental house, when Jaya was in her natal home, she was a liberty loving, self-governing, brave and spirited girl. However, after marriage, she deliberately modifies herself and her behaviour. She tries to become precisely traditional Indian woman and attaches more to her husband, her children and her home. Originally, she is not of that kind and therefore, she has to suffer. She also had to suffer in her parents' house. For her, the relationship between husband and wife and children and their parents is as follows:

*“. . . a husband and wife care for each other, live with each other until they are dead; parents care for their children, and children in turn look after their parents when they are needed; . . . a state of being.”<sup>17</sup>*

Jaya dutifully follows Vantimami's advice and accepts Mohan as a sheltering tree. She supports her behaviour by giving examples from great epics and folklores:

*“Sita following her husband into exile, Savitri dogging Death to reclaim her husband, Draupadi stoically sharing her husband's travails . . .”<sup>18</sup>*

Jaya accepts the superiority and authority of Mohan because she knew that she belongs to male dominated society. She has to consider Mohan as the chief of the family. She accepts it and maintains complete faith in Mohan and his doings. However what she gets in return. She gets Mohan's remark that he did malpractice in his office only for Jaya and the children. she is hurt by this remark. He solely holds Jaya responsible for this. Therefore, she says:



*“It had never mattered much to me until he said, ‘It was for you and the children that I did this. I wanted you to have a good life. I wanted the children to have all those things I never had.’”<sup>19</sup>*

She just goes along with Mohan, who, she thinks, has a clear idea of each and every thing, of what he wants, of the kind of life he wants to live and of the kind of home he prefers to live in. She, therefore, goes with him to the Dadar flat away from their carefully furnished home in Church gate, where, as members of a happy family, they all smiled and laughed, where Jaya, the mother, served her husband and children with love and care, where Mohan, the head of the family, smiled indulgently, and where the children were happy and excited, lively and playful. Jaya, like any other middle-class woman, has an illusion of a cosy, smiling, and happy family. She truly loves such type of a happy home and family. Her marital life with her husband, with two children-one boy and the other girl, appears to be happy. But appearances are always deceptive. In reality, her life with her husband and two children was far from true happiness. She always remembers Vanitamami’s words:

*“And so you have to keep the tree alive and flourishing, even if you have to water it with deceit and lies”.*<sup>20</sup>

Even after seventeen years of married life Jaya feels that their relationship lacks acceptance and appreciation of each other, love and attachment for each other and coordination between the two. There is no harmony in their conjugal life. She feels that they don’t make up a family; they are separate entities living under the same roof. There is muteness and hollowness between them. The result is that she gets attracted to Kamat, her neighbour and has even physical relationship with him.

From the very marriage day, Jaya has been making adjustments and negotiations for each and every time. However, Mohan could never understand it. He remains indifferent to all this. He is alleged with disapprobation of funds in the office. He is advised by his boss to go on leave for some days. This incident brings change and affects the relationship between Jaya and Mohan. It worsens their relationship further. Perhaps Mohan’s job loss, trial and dishonour to the family create and aggravate the tension in the family and particularly between the two. Now they have lost the reinforcements of their lives. When Mohan was in service, his views, wants

and desires were Jaya's views, wants and desires. But now the condition is different and Mohan is no one for Jaya now.

Because of various tensions and burdens, the matrimonial life of Jaya becomes intolerable. She is not happy at all in her nuptial life. She experiences the monotonousness in the life and therefore she is distressed. Mohan is on compulsory leave. He is jobless and workless. The life has become unchanging for Jaya and it has got fixed pattern. Somewhat their life is static. Moreover, Mohan is in the house all the time. By now Jaya is accustomed with Mohan's actions before, during and after sex. She is fed up of all this. She wants to happen something unusual in their life but it is not happening. Now, she has realized that man and woman are separated forever; they are together only when there is total physical togetherness. She now feels that they are never emotionally together, they are together only by their bodies. She remembers the night on which she was very eager for sex, the night on which she responded passionately to her husband. She recollects:

*"The contact, the coming together, had been not only momentary, but wholly illusionary as well. We had never come together, only our bodies had done that."*<sup>21</sup>

She is frightened to realize the strength of her feelings for her husband which is a shame or terror. She thinks that her emotions and feelings for her husband are a kind of disease or a disability which she has to hide from everyone. She feels:

*"Often I had told myself: love is a myth, without which sex with the same person for a lifetime would be unendurable."*<sup>22</sup>

She now begins to think her conjugal life a kind of a disaster, a tragedy. Initially, though, they were strangers to each other and ignorant of intimacy through physical link, they enjoyed sex. She suddenly understands the truth about love and romance which are inseparable from sex, a physical need of both, a man and a woman. The act of sex, Jaya feels, affirms and confirms our loneliness. Jaya feels convinced that Mohan is hurt by her prize-winning story. Mohan thinks that the story is about their personal and private life. Mohan's response to the story is dull and bitter. Jaya fails to convince him that the story has nothing to do with their life, the

story is not a self-revelation, and that it is a story about a couple, a man who could reach out to his wife only through her body. She thinks that she has done wrong to her husband and she decides to stop writing. Owing to her nature she cannot defend herself against the charges made against her by Mohan. Mohan accuses her of not caring about her husband, her children, of isolating herself from him and his concerns, and of despising him for his failure. She is surprised at Mohan shouting at her in anger:

*“But it did not matter to you, nothing mattered to you, only your needs, you could see nothing else. . . But I know that I’ve never mattered to you, not really. You married me only because Dinkar told you to. . . How can I expect you to have any feelings for me?”<sup>23</sup>*

Mohan’s charges against Jaya further widens gap between the two. Jaya could not believe the charges made by Mohan. She is terribly shocked and bewildered by these charges. She is full of a sense of angry confusion, guilt and resentment. She cries in agony:

*“What was he charging me with? And, oh God, why couldn’t I speak? Why I couldn’t I say something?”<sup>24</sup>*

Unable to bear her husband’s ugly accusation, Jaya instantly kills Suhasini in her, the woman she saw in the mirror the day of their wedding, the woman who was different from her, the woman who took the burden of wifehood off her, the woman who was humourless, and obsessive. Mohan accuses her:

*“I’ve always put you and the children first, I’ve been patient with all your whims, I’ve grudged you nothing. But the truth is that you despise me because I’ve failed.”<sup>25</sup>*

She experiences unbearable mental pain, loneliness, uneasiness, dismay, anxiety, dismay and confusion after Mohan’s departure. Jaya, now, is alone. She feels herself gasping, almost drowning in the darkness. She compares herself with Kusum. Mohan does not return for days. She receives no news from him. She eagerly waits for his return. She goes to her Church gate apartment with the hope to see him there,

but she is disappointed. Her mental stress is so intense that she falls sick. She thinks and thinks. She thinks of her childhood, of her life before and after marriage, of her children, of everything. Now she is afraid of being alone. She wants:

*“Just to live. To know that at the end of the day my family and I are under a roof, safe, enclosed, in a secure world.”*<sup>26</sup>

She considers herself a patient suffering from the disease of loneliness. It is difficult for her to relate to the world without her husband. However, the picture of a girl child, wearing a dress with pockets for the first time, thrusting her hands in them, feeling heady with the excitement of finding unexpected resources within herself, from the magic peepshow, all of a sudden, gives Jaya a new idea and thought to start life afresh. She decides to begin with the child with her hands in her pocket, and come finally to the woman who resentfully follows Mohan.

Jaya remembers Sanskrit words from the Bhagwadgita, the words she saw in Appa’s diary, the final words of Lord Krishna’s long sermon to Arjuna: Yathecchasi tatha kuru, the words that mean, ‘Do as you desire’. She interprets these words in her own way. For her, the words mean:

*“I have given you knowledge. Now you make the choice. The choice is yours. Do as you desire”.*<sup>27</sup>

She, now, realizes that she has to make choice on her own. She, so far, has been scared of breaking through the thin veneer of a happy family. She has suppressed the desperate woman in her. She considers herself responsible for her destiny. Now she is determined to live her life with courage and confidence. She is confident when she says:

*“I’m not afraid any more. The panic has gone. I’m Mohan’s wife, I had thought, and cut off the bits of me that had refused to be Mohan’s wife. Now I know that kind of fragmentation is not possible.”*<sup>28</sup>

She decides to find means to live life afresh. She is ready to start a life anew with Mohan when he returns. She decides to speak out and to listen, to erase the

silence between her and Mohan, between her and their children. She, armed with new outlook, vigour and enthusiasm, decides to face her marriage. She confesses:

*“But we can always hope, without that life would be impossible. And if there is nothing I know now, it is this: life has always to be made possible.”*<sup>29</sup>

She is resolved to erase the silence both between herself and Mohan, and between herself and her art of writing, and, thus, emerges as a ‘new’ woman ready to assert her individuality.

#### **4.2.4 Feminine Sensibility**

Jaya is married for seventeen years to Mohan and has got two children. Her life is very busy in domestic duties. But when she comes to the small old Dadar flat, she becomes an introvert and goes into deep contemplation of her past and her childhood. She contemplates only because of a crisis in her life; otherwise she would never have given a thought on herself or her individuality. According to Adele King:

*“Jaya finds her normal routine so disrupted that for the first time she can look at her life and attempt to decide who she really is.”*<sup>30</sup>

Jaya tries to bridge the huge differences between her past – before marriage and her post-marriage life to lead a more meaningful harmonious life. Jaya grows up as an independent young girl who the differences, the inequalities that exist in the society. Jaya is quite different from these women who believe that “a husband is like a sheltering tree”. She ignores them and their ideas and beliefs. She is also critical of all the fasting and endless pujas performed by her aunts. She sees the futility and meaninglessness of performing rituals to serve any particular purpose. She is quite unorthodox and radical in her views and approaches before marriage.

After marriage, Jaya becomes “Suhasini”, the name given by her husband. With this new name, Jaya is introduced to a new mode where womanliness is being celebrated. She learns not to question, not to retort therefore she says that she had

neither any questions nor any retorts for Mohan then. She had learnt to be silent. She is even ready to bandage like Gandhari and ignore to everything her husband does. Like mythological woman, Sita, she blindly follows her husband wherever he goes and does whatever he asks her. Marriage had made her a totally different person. It takes away her name, her identity and her independence.

Marriage and social set-up contribute to the downgrading of women. It prevents them from asserting their individuality. Her husband becomes her profession, her career, and her means of livelihood. Everything she does moves around her husband, Mohan even her hair cut and dresses. When she is asked by her mother whether she has gone mad and where all her lovely hair is, she replies very placidly that Mohan wanted to cut it. This Jaya is quite different from pre-marriage Jaya. Pre-marriage Jaya was quite independent and had resisted her mother's slight probing of her whereabouts:

*"She can't dictate to me! I'll do just what i want!"<sup>31</sup>*

Jaya becomes a stereotyped woman. After marriage she learns everything that is essential to lead happy and safety life in a male-dominated society. She accepts all conventional ethics and rules. She understands that being a marital woman she is supposed to propagate the image of her husband. She also absorbs to control her annoyance because according to Mohan irritation brands a woman unwomanly. She doesn't want to be branded unwomanly and she wants to keep Mohan happy. In the male-dominated society woman is not expected to express irritation. She is expected to control it. Once she asks Mohan to do the cooking but Mohan takes it lightly and considers it to be a joke. In patriarchy the roles of man and woman are fixed. Woman is supposed to cook and not man. Therefore, she comprehends that there is stringent role-division between man and woman in patriarchy. She also understands that woman is considered to be inferior to man and woman has no place whatsoever which she can claim as her own. She comes to know that woman does not belong either to her natal family or in-laws family.

She has altered herself as per Mohan's desires. However the change is only superficial, she is same as before at the core of her innermost nature. As a result there is a clash and inward commotion. She further realises that she herself and her actions

are responsible for her inferior position in her marital life. She comprehends that the mistake is her own. She gets insight through inner consideration and reflection. She recognises that her own husband is her despot. He dictates only because she never resisted him or shown any sign of opposition. She has never fought to proclaim her individuality.

There was a long silence and then the process of self-realization begins. Jaya now stops to charge others for her failures. She even stops blaming Mohan for every failure. She decides to be more pensive and discover ways to live life wholly. She comes to know the fact that everyone needs to fight his/her own battle. One has to strike a balance between ego and self. She understands that changes don't take place at once and there is always scope for progress. She admits at the end of the novel that life would be impossible without hope:

*"But we can always hope .Without that life would be impossible. And if there is nothing I know now it is this: life has always to be made possible."*<sup>32</sup>

She examines her past life and comes to know the truth about her failure as a writer. She had stopped writing good stuff because of her own fear of failure. She understands that her inert bearing has created ambition for authority in Mohan. Therefore, she herself is responsible for her degradation. She has always been following the traditional maxim that a husband is like a sheltering tree. She has willingly closed her eyes to all his activities. Right or wrong, she has never opposed him. She realizes now that she might have even encouraged him with the indifference to his unethical decision to take a bribe:

*"I bandaged my eyes tightly. I didn't want to know anything."*<sup>33</sup>

When Jaya reads her diaries, she realizes that for the last seventeen years she has been only Mohan's ideal wife, loving and caring mother of her kids and not more than that. She has effaced her own self completely. She has neglected herself totally. She has become different person than what she was before marriage. Now she is unable to ascribe herself to the type of person once she had been. Therefore she decides to go back and become Jaya of her parental home. Though it is difficult and cruel process of self-realization or self-revelation, she decides to have it. Therefore at

the very beginning of the novel, she utters that it is a cruel process, however without it the real you can never emerge.

Though cruel process, it is through this process that self-realization is possible. This self-realization is very important as it leads one to a positive direction. Jaya, at the end of the novel, is aware of “*so many crossroads, so many choices*”<sup>34</sup> that life has offered. She makes up her mind to break “that long silence” she had been nurturing. Finally, she resolves to break the silence between her and her husband.

#### **4.2.5 Revolt against Patriarchy and Social Norms**

Shashi Deshpande’s women at the beginning of the plot remain docile, obedient and complying with all the requests of their husbands. But gradually drift away from their spouses due to natural quarrels and conflicts. Deshpande seems to believe the sentiments of de Beauvoir who, she admits, has influenced her and according to whom it is women who have to define measure and explore their special domain. Owing to estrangements between wife and husband, Deshpande’s protagonists go out of their house for peace and freedom. But after careful observation and proper perception, they realize that their tyrannical husbands are better than the disgusting outside world. At the end, they understand the ways of the world, reconcile themselves to the harsh realities of life and return home with enlightenment, maturity and mellowness. This is the common theme in all her novels.

Shashi Deshpande’s novels are nothing but a depiction of convention and modernism. She rarely writes in isolation. She likes to dare to generate new spaces for her female protagonists yonder those deep-rooted traditions and values. In her writing she has no doubt represented conventions and traditions but she has successfully attempted to disrupt the obstacles of convention. She strongly believes that these conventions have made women’s lives wretched. Shashi Deshpande, in her novels, depicts the clash of convention and modernism. It is with reference to



womanly problems of domestic nature. She believes that women are exposed to labour, agony and aggravation.

Jaya, the female protagonist raises her voice against the limiting or curbing traditional role models of wife and mother. She rebels against the subjugation of women in the long-standing male-controlled system. She prefers to be silent however her muteness is her defensive shell for distress. Finally the time comes and she disrupts her muteness. She exposes the evils of male-dominated family system.

Jaya points out how Indian culture has often maintained silence on the subject of women. Her alienation gives her a chance to review the scriptures, traditions, rituals and customs of India, which stultify women from establishing herself as an authentic being. For example, at one point in the novel, Jaya discovers that her name is not included in the family tree, delineated by her uncle Ramukaka. She expresses her disapproval against it. She feels hurt when Ramukaka tells her that she does not belong to their family. Being married, she belongs to Mohan's family. But it is only half of the truth told by her uncle to avoid conflict, as Jaya's mother, grandmother, her uncle's wives find no place in the family tree. The existence of women is totally ignored in her father's house as well as in her husband's house.

Jaya has grown up in a family where she could develop her individuality under the extravagance of her father and was educated in a convent school. Her father names her 'Jaya' which means 'victory.' He has very high opinion about her daughter. He used to tell Jaya that she is different from other girls and she will flourish in life. Unfortunately, he dies of heart attack at an early age before she completes her graduation. This comes as a great blow to her career. Jaya is not on good terms with her mother because her mother always opposed her husband. Jaya observes that her mother hardly feels the death of her husband. Therefore, Jaya decides to stay in the hostel rather than being with her mother. She is astonished at her mother's careless attitude. She does not like her mother's leaving for Ambegaon after her father's death. She feels that her mother has ignored her twenty years of life with her husband in Saptagiri as an interval. Perhaps, Jaya's decision to marry Mohan is a result of her insolent attitude against her mother. It is perhaps the sign of her readiness to get autonomy from the control of parental home.

Jaya's reaction that it is really hard for Mohan to wait as he is not used to it can be seen as her fury towards the condition of woman in Indian patriarchal society. She makes difference between the nature of a man's waiting and a woman's waiting. She knows that Mohan does not know what waiting is because he has always moved gradually from one moment to the next. Jaya rather angrily says that waiting is a game and for women it starts right from early childhood. She has to wait for marriage, then for husband and in-laws and even for children to be born. She disapproves waiting.

Jaya is an educated and modern woman, therefore, she was constantly engaged in the battle between the conservative and the present way of discerning and the way of living. Jaya has to face difficulties in her matrimonial life with Mohan. Once she wrote an imaginary story and published it. She wins an award for the story but her husband does not like it. He takes the story as the story of their private life. He feels injured by the story. As he has to face communal disgrace, he begins to behave strangely with Jaya. Jaya is convinced from his face that she has done something wrong to him, therefore, she stops writing at once. She pronounces:

*“And looking at his stricken face, I had been convinced. I had done him wrong. And I had stopped writing after that.”*<sup>35</sup>

In fact, Jaya should have tried to persuade Mohan and tell him the difference between a fictional story and the real life. She has strong desire to be liberated, free and to lead a sovereign life. Unfortunately, she has no sufficient courage to go against Mohan and masculine supremacy. When Mohan is in terrible need of Jaya's comradeship, she refuses it. After some time, she scrutinizes, anticipates and studies her own views and thoughts and she grasps her errors. Lastly she feels the inevitability of affirming her individuality. She understands that she needs to speak to Mohan and remove the silence between them. She declares that:

*“If I have to plug ‘hole in the heart’ I will have to speak, to listen, I will have to erase the silence between us.”*<sup>36</sup>

Jaya leads the life of a typical Indian housewife. Initially, she walks on the path her husband Mohan dictates. She does not submit the freedom of her will, mind and action to expectations or demands of the social order as a wife. In the course of time,

it results in her sufferings and the authority of her husband. This is a case of a suffering wife and a dominating husband. She never communicates her feelings and decisions to her husband. She chooses the path of silence. She does have moments of feelings of anger and disgust but suppresses them under the cover of silence. She learns to be silent and keeps her grudges to herself.

But the threshold of her patience ends, when her husband takes her submission for granted. She does not like Mohan's decision to go back to their Dadar flat because he does not consult her or feel the necessity to do so. She is angry with him. By Mohan's decision Jaya is reminded of:

*"Sita following her husband into exile, Savitri dogging death to reclaim her husband, Draupadi stoically sharing her husband's travails..."<sup>37</sup>*

Here silence fails as a defensive cover and madness takes over. When they are in Dadar flat, thinking of societal disgrace because of Mohan's indulgence in some business malpractice, she bursts out into a hysterical laughter, which upsets Mohan so much that he leaves the flat without a word:

*"Laughter burst out of me, spilled over, and Mohan stared at me in horror as I rocked helplessly."<sup>38</sup>*

Jaya understands Mohan's agony, which is due to a transformation in her behaviour. He sees the real Jaya in place of Suhasini. The very episode compels Jaya to go through a course of emotional turmoil and contemplation. She deeply scrutinizes her years of compliance and muteness and finally resolves to break the covering of quietness. She finally gathers that she has belittled her own competencies. She has done a mistake of giving Mohan a higher place than her. This act on her part has helped to develop a superiority complex in her husband. Hence, she herself is responsible for this. She also agrees that up to now she has led a deceitful life.

Now she is well aware of her flaw and therefore she resolves to overcome it. She becomes aware that the muteness is her flaw. She resolves to proclaim her autonomy. She also resolves to throwaway the conventional pattern of patriarchy. This shows that she begins to believe in her capacities and in her demonstrative and

rational powers. The important aspect of her character here is that she is not rebellious but she has a longing to discover contentment inside her association with Mohan. Jaya does not act upon her resolution but at least it indicates that she has got capacity to take decisions independently. Now she is sure that change is must because one cannot stay immobile for the whole life. One has to change irrespective of the fact that takes lot of time. A transformation is unquestionably noticeable in Jaya, a transformation in a positive way and at right stage. It protects her from complete collapse. Now Jaya will not act or say only as per the wish of her husband Mohan. She will act and say what she likes.

### ***4.3 The Dark Holds No Terror***

#### **4.3.1 Image of woman**

In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, the novelist depicts the quandary of a real career-oriented woman, Sarita. Sarita is a doctor by profession. She has to revolt against her mother who stood for patriarchy and all that is right as per Indian tradition. Her mother has a strong preference for her younger brother, Dhruva. Sarita does not like this. Gender discrimination and sibling jealousy as well as Saru's mother's preference for her younger brother makes it impossible for Saru to understand or appreciate her younger brother. Unfortunately, Dhruva is drowned to death accidentally but Saru's mother holds Saru responsible for his death. She blames Saru. Saru is hurt to the core by her mother's words.

*"Why didn't you die? Why are you alive, when he's dead?"*<sup>39</sup>

Saru is forced to tolerate the weight of this strained guilty conscience throughout her life. Saru hates her mother for it. Later on Saru as a sign of rebellion chooses medicine as a career. Her mother does not like the decision of Saru. Moreover, Saru also falls in love with Manohar. She gets married to a man her mother objects too strongly. After marriage, she takes oath not to come back to her parental home and never looks back, nor does she return there till her mother's death. She

returns to this house after fifteen years. She has heard from someone about her mother's death. Therefore, she decides to see her father. But she is not properly welcomed by her father. It may be because of her father's loyalty to his dead wife.

When she comes back to her natal home, she finds no change. Everything is at the same place where it was when she had left the house. The same seven pairs of large stone slabs were leading to the front door. The traditional and religious plant Tulsi is the only spot of green. Tulsi plant is very important in Hindu mythology. It is believed that the woman who worships Tulsi dies before her husband. Her mother used to worship the plant and the result is that she died before her husband. She finds that even inside the house nothing is changed. Everything is as it was. "*Nothing had changed.*"<sup>40</sup> But there is change in the behaviour and treatment of her father. She is welcomed by her father as an unwanted guest or like a stranger.

Though she had decided not to come back to this house in the future, she has to come. It is because of her husband's sexual sadism which becomes unbearable to her, compels her to come back to her father's house. Saru wishes to escape from the mother figure, which has stood for power and dominance. But after her marriage with Manohar, she finds that she is again under the control of her husband. Her husband, Manohar, suffers an inferiority complex for career wise he is less successful than her. His self is injured and he starts behaving brutally towards her at night. As he behaves quite normal during day time, she does not discuss things with him frankly. She prefers to undergo the disgrace silently.

Thus through Sarita, Shashi Deshpande presents the predicament of a successful career woman. Sarita suffers the pull of modernity as against the traditional attitude of an ideal Indian wife. She has to manage with her marital discords to the best of her ability. It is really ironic that outwardly, Saru seems to be 'liberated woman' but inwardly, she is the silent disgraced wife. She is unable to break away from the constraints of her marriage.

Sarita, being educated, is scholastically and intelligently a 'liberated woman'. Therefore, she cannot choose to run away from the conjugal life. She decides to confront her matrimonial complications independently and solve them herself. She never thought of separating from her husband or any other solution to her matrimonial

problems. She tries to persuade and aware her husband to treat her with parity. She never inclined to spoil the bliss of her marital life as well as the congruence of her family life. She attempts to bridge the gap between her principles and real life. She tries to maintain balance between the two. She embodies the harassed middle class woman who adheres to her ethical beliefs to the extreme point.

Sarita does not have faith in arguments. She does not believe people who urge womenfolk to be self-governing and to fight for establishing their own individuality. She is well-aware that male members of the society cannot bear woman wishful for autonomy or individuality. She is sure that in a patriarchal set up it won't be allowed because male members would like to have their supremacy over female members. As a result, she moulds herself to fit in the set up. She tries to remain in her profession to be unperturbed, excellent and deceptively autonomous. However she is scared of offending her husband, Manohar. When she comprehends that the real darkness is within her, she in order to escape from that gloom, decides to go back to her natal home.

In her parental home, after much contemplation she is successful in locating the terror of the dark which is within her. But she lacks the courage to break out of her refined conservative outlook. She is unable to face life bravely. She fails to speak out it with Manu. Therefore she fails to become a whole person. But in the end she decides to do what is essential to come out of this traumatic situation. She begins to take real pleasure in being a doctor again as she had been formerly enjoying but now without a guilty conscience. She hopes that Manu would also acknowledge her as the genuine woman and not as a mere money-making associate.

Thus, Sarita most agonizingly completes a mental journey from entirely indifferent approach to an almost optimistic vision. Now she is free from the ghosts of the past. She is not haunted by them. She is able to dismiss the darkness of ignorance which is within her with the awareness of self as a person.

#### **4.3.2 Sarita's Quest for Self-identity**

Sarita, the female protagonist of *The Dark Holds No Terror* comes back to her parental home. There she gets lot of free time for self-examination and insight. She

has come back to her parents' home after fifteen years. She has come there under the pretext to see her lonesome father. However this is not true, she has come back for three things, the first to recognize her real inward person, the second to escape from the terrifying sadism of her husband and the third to proclaim her capabilities. The very beginning of the novel informs us about this:

*“Sarita’s coming back to her parent’s house, after fifteen years, as a refugee, apparently to see her lonely father after her mother’s death, but in reality to escape the frightening viciousness her husband inflicts on her every night.”*<sup>41</sup>

When she takes a decision to go back to her natal house, she is asked by her husband about reason for her going her father’s house. He was surprised to know the reason for her going back to her father’s house. He was not able to grasp the reason for her going back as she was doing that after fifteen years of their marriage. Sarita could not hide her inner emotional state. She replies him plainly and in a straight forward manner that:

*“To sleep peacefully the night through. To wake up without pain. To go through tomorrow without apprehension. Not to think, not to dream. Just to live.”*<sup>42</sup>

It is obvious from Sarita’s answer to her husband that she is not contented in her wedded life. It is also clear that she longs to seepage from *“this hell of savagery and submission.”*<sup>43</sup> She is tired of the barbarity of her husband. She doesn’t want to lead a life of submission. She wishes to detect whether the hell is inside her. She wants to live in the company of her knowledgeable father and find the solution for her marital problems. In her natal house, she meditates on the proceedings of her bygone life and scrutinizes her relation with her husband and now dead mother. This meditation and scrutiny demonstrates her mode for her self-assured and well-balanced future.

Sarita is successful doctor. Her husband, Manohar or Manu is an English teacher in a third rate small college. Their marriage is a love marriage still Saru experiences the feeling of terrified trapped animal in the hands of her husband. Therefore, she comes back to her father’s house and stays there. There she remembers

her childhood days. She was constantly given ill-treatment and was overlooked by her parents. Her brother, Dhruva was favoured by both of them. He was three year younger than her. She used to dictate Dhruva exclusively. Dhruva used to call her Sarutai. Unfortunately, he expired at seven by sinking. Though Saru was there and she had seen him drowning, she could do nothing and was helpless. All her attempts to save him were in vain. Her mother blamed her for the death of Dhruva. Her mother accused Sarita and said:

*“You killed him. Why didn't you die ? Why are you alive, when he is dead?”<sup>44</sup>*

Thus, Saru, in her childhood, grows up as a prey of her mother's gender discrimination. It reduces her later life into a frantic fight to defeat the early persecution. She fights to give good reason for her decisions to her mother. Her mother no longer acknowledges her as a daughter. She struggles to unearth a novel sense to her life. She intends to develop and take care of even-handed standpoint on her way to diversified roles as a wife, mother and as a career woman. Her mother, who holds her responsible for the death of Dhruva, never forgives her. She is so grieved that she is unable to grasp the daughter's bafflement and sorrow. The fact is that Saru has also lost her kid brother as her mother has lost her son. Saru is also sorrowful for that and thus, requires emotional support. Saru's mother blames her in such a way that Saru never gets respite from it. Rather she is never allowed to have any escape from the sense of guilt. The result is that she never feels secured in her relationship with others. She suffers from inferiority complex. Her mother behaves with her in dominating way and tries to control her. In Saru's adolescence mother considers her to be her rival. She always shows the upper hand and does not tolerate any act of Saru outside her domain.

Now Sarita, whose mother is dead, comes back to her parental home. Although she pretends that she has come to see her father, in reality, she has come to escape the terrifying cruelty her husband imposes on her every night. She wants to forget all her anguish. Here in her father's company, she reviews the events of her life. She reflects on her childhood, her tyrannizing mother, her marriage with young poet, Manohar, her life after marriage and her children, etc. She reflects on the reasons for her husband's turning from loving and considerate to brutal and



inconsiderate. It is because that his career is not going anywhere and his wife overtakes him professionally. She broods over all this and understands that it is her husband's male sexism which makes her to suffer. She gradually realizes that there is more to life than dependency on marriage, parents and other such institutions. Therefore she decides to apply her new knowledge about life and make her life better.

She was so much influenced by her mother's gender discrimination and her experiences in her girlhood days that she had strong feeling to become a powerful and dominant person in her later life. She felt that her ambition can be fulfilled only through education. Saru was impressed by a lady who had been to her place once. The lady was so pleasant that in front of her every other woman was looking mediocre. She was really different from other women. After that lady left the place, Sarita made an enquiry about her and came to know that the lady was a doctor. She was very much impressed by the appearance of that doctor. That's why she decided to become a doctor. She felt that it would relieve her from her 'dreary' and 'dull'<sup>45</sup> life. No doubt that she is an intellectual girl. She studies hard. She secured first class in her Inter Science examination. Her seeking first class is a permit for her to seek admission in the medical college. Her father asked her about her further education and what subjects she wishes to take up for her B. Sc. Sarita very boldly tells her father that she desires to do medicine and not B. Sc. Sarita's mother does not like the idea and hence, she rejects it. Her mother asks her several questions. In fact Sarita and her mother were not on good terms. Sarita even didn't look at her mother during the discussion. Finally she looked at her and said:

*"I am not talking to you. I'm not asking you for anything. I know what your answer will be. No forever a 'no' to anything I want. You don't want me to have anything. You don't ever want me to live."*<sup>46</sup>

Saru's mother did not like her daughter's decision to take up medicine as a career rather she was shocked to hear it. She opposed it in her own way. However, Saru was obstinate and she knew the truth. Therefore, she says:

*"Yes I'm a girl but it's more than that I'm not Dhruva."*<sup>47</sup>

Saru's mother acted like a carrier of tradition and patriarchy. Her mother considered Saru as someone who had to fulfil certain domestic duties. She was supposed to follow the tradition and rules which her mother had already prepared for her. They were rivals to each other. Saru was disliked by her mother. She was always against her.

Finally, Sarita becomes a doctor. In the course of time, she gets an identity as a doctor. She is recognised by her neighbours. One day when she walks back to her house in a blood stained coat after treating the victims of an accident, her neighbours become aware of her professional identity as a doctor. At once her profession achieves for her popularity and a position superior to Manu's. She is celebrated and appreciated by the neighbours. They come to her for consultation. The admiration that Saru gets disturbs her husband Manu. He feels his authority and superiority is threatened. When Sarita later tries to analyze her conjugal relationship, she remembers:

*“But perhaps, the same thing 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.”<sup>48</sup>*

Saru's deep contemplation about her marriage and married life makes her aware that her success as a doctor has killed her husband's strength. She feels guilty for that. But now her introspection sets her free from the feeling of guilt. Initially she feels that she herself is responsible for Manu's inferior position. Her contemplation helps her to overcome the feeling of guiltiness. Therefore, she decides not to tolerate any more mortification which she has to bear for Manu's failure and her success.

Moreover, she resolves to assert her identity and fight herself to establish it. She decides to fight and win the battle herself. She feels that her life is her own life. Therefore, she must face the problems and difficulties herself and should not depend on others for that. She also feels that there is only one protection and that is her own self. The prologue to the novel says: *“You are your own refuge; there is no other refuge. This refuge is hard to achieve.”* Therefore, she resolves to go back to Bombay to her husband's house. She also resolves to face her husband and every situation confidently. The fact is that she is coming back to Mohan not to tolerate or surrender

but to face boldly and bravely. She is able to find refuge in herself as a wife and doctor. Saru as a wife finds refuge in the doctor, in her own self. It is the power of doctor in her that helps her to care her husband. She is now resolved and also bold enough to return to her husband and bring him out from his feeling of depression and inferiority complex. She is resolved to bring normality in her marital life.

In this way, Saru is able to attain power and establish her identity. The doctor in her has finally given her comfort and contentment. She is able to be contented in her own life. The important thing is that she could bring it in the life of others also. She could put on her ability to generate and provide pleasure. It has given her an identity as well as recognition.

The end of novel hints at that Saru is not going to suffer any more for Manu's annoyance. Now, being confident and empowered, Saru realizes that the spirit of any marriage is understanding and mutual respect. It is not suppression of one by the other. This knowledge dawns in Saru and she becomes ready to confront her husband as well as others. It is because of Saru's empowerment that she could take this step which is revolutionary in itself.

#### **4.3.3 Husband and wife Relationship**

In this novel marital relationship that is the relationship between husband and wife plays very major role. Marriage is a sign of inhabitant parity between man and woman. It is a joint venture between husband and wife and both needs to share between themselves the joys and the responsibilities. Marriage is an essential affair in man's and woman's life. It is the most two-sided and jointly pleasurable partnership. The key to happy married life is the ability of partners to tolerate, to accommodate each other and go on. However, it is unfortunate that in many marriages women are dominated and subjugated by their husbands. Moreover, wives don't find freedom and space in their marital life. Saru, the female protagonist of this novel belongs to this group.

Saru wants to be an independent. In the medical college, she is attracted to Manohar. Her desire is to have more triumphant male partner who will give her the meaning of life. Manohar is perfect for her desire. He is a writer and a poet. His

personality is a crowd thronging and charming personality. He is her hero. He has represented her Prince Charming who would propel her into a world that was very different from the limited one she had inhabited with her parents. She displays her own internalisation of the popular romantic stereotypes of the heroic male irresistible heroine. She explains it later during her reminiscences as:

*“I was all female and dreamt of being the adored and chosen of a superior, superhuman male. That was glory enough.....to be chosen by that wonderful man.”*<sup>49</sup>

One day, she introduces herself to Manu as Smita’s friend. Then he remembers his previous two meetings with Saru. After that they continued to meet each other frequently and love each other affectionately. Saru is of course hungry for love. She begins to satisfy her desire for love through Manohar. In the course of time she marries Manu though her parents are against of their marriage. She has a longing for man’s love. She wants nothing but a love. She desires to love and to be loved continually. She provokes Manu every now and then to prove his love for her.

Initial days of Sarita’s marital life were very happy days. No doubt she was living in one room apartment with her husband. The surrounding was ugly and dirty, *“the corridors smelling of urine, the rooms with their dark sealed in odours”*<sup>50</sup>. Still it was like a heaven for her. However, her happiness was momentary. It turned to be a mirage for her. Very soon, she realizes this as an illusionary. Now she remembers how a specific event becomes a turning point in their heavenly wedded relationship.

On a particular day, she returns late in night in her bloodstained coat after helping out the victims of a fire accident in a factory nearby. Suddenly the people from neighbourhood come to know about her identity. She is recognised by them. They began to come to her for medical help and other related matters with it. She is being valued and respected by them. Manu began to feel painful with Saru’s steady rise in position. He feels being ignored by the people when they greet Saru. Initially, Saru is unable to understand the change in Manu. But in the course of time, she understands it. Now she is sure that it is her well-known and reputed doctor position which has made Manu to change and strained her marital relationship with Manu. She contemplates over it much later she understands that at the time of marriage Manu

was a young man and she was her bride and now she is the doctor and he is her husband.

She is now a successful doctor and he is a lecturer in third-rate college. As she makes progress in her practice as a doctor, she becomes more and more busy person. The result is that she fails to spare enough time for Manu and her children and Manu has more leisure and spends more time with the children. It worsens their relationship further. He also begins to suffer from feelings of inferiority arising from her reversed social roles. Certain incidents in their married life aggravate the already strained relation between the two to the extent that in the privacy of their room at night he doesn't behave like a husband. Manu's inferiority complex breaks open, when in an interview with Saru, the interviewing girl asks the question to Manu innocently that,

*“How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?”<sup>51</sup>*

This particular incident and other all events combined together hit his ego and make him feel humiliated. He feels helpless and effeminate. He resents her for her success but cannot prevent her from surging ahead in her profession. It is perhaps because he has got used to the luxuries that her money provides. Later on it becomes difficult for Sarita to bear the burden of superior financial position which causes the problem in their relationship, she asks Manu for permission to give up her work. Manu being well aware that with his meagre salary it is not possible to enjoy all those things which they are enjoying now, therefore, does not permit her and tells her:

*“Come on Saru, don't be silly. You know how much I earn. You think we can live this way on that?”<sup>52</sup>*

The clash between husband and wife sharpens further. Manu's love for Saru dries and Saru begins to hate male-female relationship. She believes that the man-woman relationship should have the foundation of affection, love and respect for each other and not on obligation, necessity and charm. She begins to hate the word love. She realizes that now she is not feeling any affection or adoration for her husband and children. It has been vanishing. Because of her busy schedule as a doctor she is not able perform her earnest responsibilities towards her husband and children. She thinks

that the children are deprived of due adoration and attention as she comes late in the evening. Besides there is marital discord because of her superior status in societal and economic matters as compared to Manu's status who is a lecturer in third rate college and is paid a meagre salary. Moreover, her extra-marital relationship with Boozie also upsets Manu. Because of all this, he feels the compulsion to proclaim his masculinity over Saru. He feels humiliated. Therefore, he initiates his nightly carnal attacks and thereby, he tries to compensate his agony and humiliation. He considers himself to be useless and weak. He fails to match Saru professionally. He wants to punish and hurt Saru so that his humiliation will be compensated. He tries to proclaim his supremacy and control through corporal ferocity. He practises carnal attacks at night as an armament to upset his wife. Throughout a day he is a devoted husband and at night he turns out to be a rapist.

It becomes usual practice for Manu to inflict his sexual brutality on Saru during the night. Every day, after each such incident, Sarita is rendered helpless against his greater strength and feels terrorised into submission. Every next morning Mohan remembers nothing of what he did during the night and behaves as if nothing happened or as if it was done in an unconscious state. He is in his natural self in the morning. Manu is a total failure due to the idea of Indian manliness. In order to restore his manhood and to affirm his authority, he sexually beats his wife. Saru is tired of all this stuff. At this juncture she comes to know about her mother's death. Though, she avows earlier that never to return her natal home, she leaves her husband and children and comes back to that house. She does so only to escape from her husband's sexual cruelty. Besides she has reasons to do so as she won't have to undergo the humiliation of her mother's taunts, and she has an explanation for her returning home on account of her mother's death.

There in her parents' house, Saru gets a chance to introspect over her past, her own mentality, her own position in relation to other members in the family and in the society. After deep introspection she realizes herself and decides to confront the problems bravely. When she comes to know about Manu's arrival at her father's house, she plans to leave her parental house. She is not ready to face her husband. As she thinks that it is highly impossible for her to continue to live with such brutal and hysterical husband, she decides to seek divorce from him. However, her father whom

she calls Baba comes to her help and advises her that she should not run away from problems instead she should face them bravely. She obeys her father and with a firm determination she decides not to leave her husband but to face him and the society.

#### **4.3.4 Feminine Sensibility**

Saru, the female protagonist is grieved by the unequal treatment given to her by her parents. She is treated as inferior than her brother even in her own home. Dhruva, her brother is given prime importance than her. He enjoys the superior position in the house. It is because Saru is girl and Dhruva is a boy. She feels humiliated because her birthdays are not observed as Dhruva's. She is rebellious from her childhood and hence, she questions and complains about such treatment. As a child, she is very much troubled by the gender discrimination between Dhruva and herself by her parents. Her parents ignore her and value Dhruva. She is constantly reminded of the worthlessness of her sex. This unequal treatment from her parents has a lifelong harmful effect on Saru's later life. She feels that nobody loves cares and desires her. She is preoccupied by this thought all the time. The feeling that she is redundant remains in her mind and in her character for the rest of life and it has negative impact on the whole of her life. She remains emotionally, mentally and psychologically weak.

Saru suffers from a sense of inferiority complex. Externally she seems to be a dominant sister to her brother, a hostile daughter to her mother but within she is a pathetic child. Therefore, she longs for the attention from her parents and also for the kind of utmost care and affection her brother is able to enjoy. This has a negative impact on her during her whole life. Because of which she reacts against all forms of domination and limitations for a girl child in the family as well as in the society. She challenges her mother and the traditional values. She hates her mother to the extent that she doesn't want to be like her mother. Saru is held responsible for Dhruva's death by her mother. She is blamed and scolded every now and then for this. She wants to prove herself. Her mother always used to ask her one question "*Why didn't you die?*"<sup>53</sup> Saru wanted to answer that question of her mother and she also wants to have reason for living. Therefore, she studies hard to be able to seek admission in medical college.

When Saru's mother asks her about her decision to join medicine as a career, she deliberately ignores her mother. Instead of talking to her mother, she talks to her father. This clearly indicates her rebellion and defiance. She develops the attitude of indifference towards her mother. She pleads her father to allow her to join medicine. Though her mother was against of Saru's joining medicine, Saru succeeds in getting permission from her father which doubles her happiness. In the course of time, Saru defies the traditional mode of arranged marriage. She marries Manohar, a man from low caste but of her choice. Through this Saru asserts her individuality.

After marriage, there is change in the personality of Saru. As a doctor she becomes more and more successful whereas her husband who is a lecturer in a small college becomes more and more frustrated. It creates a feeling of hatred for Saru in her husband's mind. It makes Manohar a sadist and to prove his manhood, he subjects Saru to his sexual assaults in the night. Saru has to bear domestic violence at the hands of her own husband. Now she is a confident doctor during daytime and a terrified wife during nights. She appears to be independent woman but she does not remain so. She loses her independence of spirit. Till this moment she was independent and fearless, ever ready to reject any kind of domination. Now she turns into fearful, terrified and afraid of the dark. She allows herself loose to be carried away by social norms irrespective of whether she likes it or not.

Saru thinks that women are always the victims of sexual politics. It makes a divide between man and woman, husband and wife. A woman has to accept that secondary and oppressed position. Once, Saru in her lecture on medicine as a career for women at a girl's college attacks male hegemony in a rather ironical tone. She shows her contempt for brute masculinity of man. She gives way to her emotions and feelings that arise out of her bitter experiences. She presents a perfect recipe for a successful marriage rather ironically and says:

*"A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. If he's an M. A., you should be a B. A. If he's 5'4" tall, you shouldn't be more than 5'3" tall. If he's earning five hundred rupees, you should earn not more than four hundred and ninety-nine rupees. That's the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage."*<sup>54</sup>



Saru visits her parents' home after her mother's death. It is to escape her husband's terrifying cruelty. It is here in the family of orientation she finds time to contemplate on her life, her past. It serves as a curative course to her offended 'psyche'. At the end of contemplation, she realizes that she has been blaming herself for all the past errors and mistakes. She also acquaints that she has been punishing herself by bearing and maintaining silence. Saru ruminates:

*"My brother died because I heedlessly turned back on him. My mother died alone because I deserted her. My husband is a failure because I destroyed his manhood."*<sup>55</sup>

When she comes to know about Manu's arrival at her father's house, she plans to leave her parental house. She is not ready to face her husband. As she thinks that it is highly impossible for her to continue to live with such brutal and hysterical husband, she decides to seek divorce from him. However, her father whom she calls Baba comes to her help and advises her that she should not run away from problems instead she should face them bravely. She obeys her father and with a firm determination she decides not to leave her husband but to face him and the society. She recognizes that she is, *"the guilty sister, the undutiful daughter, the unloving wife."*<sup>56</sup>

Even at the beginning of the last chapter, Saru lacks confidence. She is afraid of facing her husband when she receives a telegram informing her that he is coming to take her. She insists her father not to open the door when he comes. It is only when she gathers courage and tells her father about her married life and about how she has been tortured by Manohar during nights, she feels relieved from self-imposed diseases. Her father consoles her with his kind and affectionate words. Then, she slowly realizes:

*"If I have been a puppet it is because I made myself one."*<sup>57</sup>

She realizes that she herself is responsible for her miserable lot and she has the power to control and improve her life if she is determined to do so. It is her profession of a doctor that saves her and helps her to assert her individuality. Finally, Saru

realizes her worth. Now, she is no longer afraid of darkness. She seems to be confident about everything when she says to her father:

*“Oh yes, Baba, if Manu comes, tell him to wait. I’ll be back as soon as I can.”*

58

She is now self-assured about herself. The dark holds no terror for her. She is ready to face anyone and anything. She takes control of her life because she understands her life is her own and she has got every right to lead it as per her wish.

#### **4.3.5 Revolt against Patriarchy and Social Norms**

Saru is rebellious from her childhood. Saru as a child fights against gender discrimination made by her mother by showering more love and affection on her son, Dhruva. She openly raises question against it and complains. One day her mother did not give her permission to go to a movie with her friend. She is not given permission only because she was going with a friend whose family reputation was at low ebb. It makes Saru angry. In anger she leaves her home to be at a lonely place and hides herself near burial ground. She does it with the intention to frighten her family members. She is followed by her brother who drowns and dies there. Therefore, her mother holds her responsible for the death of Dhruva.

Saru’s mother is conservative and sticks up to the Brahminical customs and traditions. Saru by opposing her mother opposes the traditional values and customs. Saru was never happy that her mother did not allow her serving the main meal as per the custom. She was made to serve only the salt, pickles, and chutneys. Her mother did not allow her to serve the main meal in the name of cleanliness. In reality, it was the dominant and bossy nature of her mother. This made her feel shocked about inflexible traditions yet cringed, stickled by mothers like her. The novelist, through Saru, challenges the prevailing double standard code of conduct of the society that has different scales for men and women.

Saru prefers to study medicine is also much against mother’s expectation. She chose her partner who was from lower class than their without caring to take her mother’s advice. Her wedding ceremony with Manohar is a way to explain her radical

against patriarchal customs. In these two matters Saru acted against her mother that drove her hostile and indifferent towards Saru. Her decisions in these two matters clearly underline her moral departure from Hindu Brahminical family. What her mother cherished as values of the Brahmin she blasted to pieces.

She tried to break the traditional customs like female become bold enough to ride on two-wheeler and at the similar moment felt how intimidated down upon by the similar conventional ties to bind her to bend to shift, perform and purpose like a dummy in the hands of male husbands.

Saru marries a man of her choice, going against the wishes of her parents. She defies patriarchy as well as traditional values of arranged marriage. The result is that there is permanent break in her relationship with her mother. Initially, Saru is happy with Manu and is not sorry about the end of her relationship with her mother. Her husband, Manu, proves to be a failure in his professional life, and therefore turns into a sadist in his relation with Saru. Saru, on the contrary, becomes a successful doctor, which adds to his frustration. He tortures and physically assaults Saru at night. Her economic independence makes Manu feel thoroughly insecure. Saru, though an educated and independent woman never utters a word of protest. She bears his brutality quietly. Her husband becomes the biggest controlling agent in her life. She can't reveal her agony and pain to anyone around her. For the feeling of guilt and shame, she is unable to reveal her torture even to her father. She is afraid to admit her marriage as a failure because that would make her feel embarrassed in front of her father. Here, in addition to her husband, her own psyche also becomes a cramping force in her life.

While defying traditional value in conjugal life, Saru maintains the extra-marital relationship with Booze. She lets him do that in order to climb in position and status. No doubt, she gains money from Booze and also position and status, but she has not remained faithful to her husband. Moreover she has lost her right to be looked upon as a loyal wife. Developing or maintaining extra-marital relationship is a treacherous act on the part of married woman. However, Saru pampers in it and through it she wishes to revenge her sadist husband. Whatever may be the case, but she

defies conventional standards and values of conjugal life. One of the famous scholars, Iyengar, K. R. S. remarked that:

*“Shashi Deshpande’s first novel, The Dark Holds No Terrors (1980) presents an unusual character, Sarita, who defies her mother to become a Doctor, defies her caste to marry outside, and defies social conventions by using Boozy to advance her career.”*<sup>59</sup>

Thus Sarita defies her mother, the caste system and social conventions. She protests against the kind of treatment that is given to woman in our culture. Her education makes her observe gender bias that her parents show in the treatment of a son and a daughter. In one of her recapitulations, Saru recollects her interaction with her mother.

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

*“Who cares?”*

*“We have to care if you don’t. We have to get you married.”*

*“I don’t want to get married.”*

*“Will you live with us all your life?”*

*“Why not”*

*“You can’t”*

*“And Dhruva”*

*“He is different. He’s a boy.”*<sup>60</sup>

Her mother disheartened her to seek admission for medical science. She believed in conventional ethics and morals, therefore, she sought after Saru to train into a disciplined girl. She desired Saru to stay obedient, submissive, shy and humbly tamed and to cherish all burdens at home. She had her plan to suppress Saru’s desires, wants, fond and yearnings of all trifling and innocent feelings. It was done all through the early influential years of growing. Saru before marriage was so pacified by her

mother that she could bear all burdens of sex attacks of her husband. She tolerated all these erotic attacks of her husband for ten years but after the demise of her mother she couldn't stand for it, therefore, she returns to her paternal house.

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## Chapter V

### Feminist Stance in Manju Kapur's Female Protagonists

#### 5.1 Introduction

Manju Kapur is one of the modern feminist women writers in India. She is a professor in English in a college in Delhi University. She is a renowned novelist of great eminence. One can see Kapur's instructional experience and capability in her writing. She began her vocation as a writer with her first novel *Difficult Daughters*, published in 1998. She has won the high esteemed 'Commonwealth Writer's Prize' for the best first novel, *Difficult Daughters* in South Asia. Till date she has in all written and published five novels. All her novels have received ample appreciation from the readers, reviewers and the critics of the literature. Her second novel *A Married Woman* was published in 2003 and this novel brought much attention for her. It was also widely accepted and quoted as "Fluent and witty" in "The Independent". Her third novel, *Home* was published in 2006. This novel clearly shows Manju Kapur's deep-rooted understanding of Indian women in the traditional society. Her fourth novel, *The Immigrant* was published in 2009 and fifth novel *Custody* was published in 2012.

All her five novels have different themes but deal with the typical middle class imaginings, optimisms and ambitions. The background of these novels is urban in nature. She successfully catches the city life with ironical detachments. She has represented the various consequences of changing human relationship between men and women with detail and graphic observation in all her novels. She has a deep insight in telling the tales of common people in day-to-day life. In her novels, there is a unique tone of universalization, a plight from personal to universal, from innocence to experience in the so-called journey in this world. She has very craftily linked traditions, conventions and customs with a unique sense of freedom which has been regarded as the essence of modernity.

Her first novel, *Difficult Daughters* deals with the relationship between the mothers and daughters. It tells us that the aim of every mother is to find suitable boy for her daughter and get them married and help them to settle. *A Married Woman*

highlights on the relationship between man and woman particularly the relationship between the husband and the wife. It also introduces the reader with lesbian relationship. It may be thought as a feminist fictional writings. Her both novels depict the difficulties faced by educated Indian female population. She has done it with genuineness and insight. Her female protagonists fight against taboos, social boundaries and artificial code of conduct in a conventional society. Though she has depicted the woman of the forties as a dependent woman, it also symbolizes the modern woman. It is clear that the woman is still struggling to ascertain her individuality. She is still fighting for the freedom of self-expression and self-assertion. Her both novels demonstrate the situations and difficulties of female protagonists in the patriarchal society.

Manju Kapur in her novels presents the changing image of women. Her portrayals do not match the traditional portrayals of enduring women, self-sacrificing women. Her protagonists are self-assured, self-confident and determined women. They succeed in making society aware of their demands. They are also successful in finding and providing a medium of self-expression. Manju Kapur, through her novels could create a room to discuss the issue of woman and modernity. In spite of it there is still an anguish which prevails throughout her novels regarding social and gender construct that arise as result of modernity. She presents women who try to establish their own identity.

Manju Kapur successfully highlights women's position as an individual identity, trying hard to come out of the traditional, stereotype and archetypal home maker. Her women are desperate to break the age old shackles of the patriarchal society to enter into the new world of their own with no terms and conditions or restrictions to bound them back where they do not wish to. She has portrayed her female protagonists as absolute rebel to that of timid, oppressed and suppressed women. Her female protagonists are awakened souls who know how to lead their lives on their own terms. No doubt they have to compromise to a great deal but it is by their choice and not by force either of the family or of the patriarchal society. *Virmati* of *Difficult Daughters* and *Astha* of *A married Woman* are the trend setters in almost all fields be it education, their free life style, their choice of life partner or even their extra-marital affairs. Manju Kapur has portrayed a very revolutionary image of

women in the setting of pre-independence and post-independence period. It was a period when women were not allowed to even cross the threshold of their houses or even had no voice of their own.

Her novels present a long, unending struggle of women to establish and make a position equal to man in the society herself. The distinction between the man and woman in the Indian context is the major theme of her fiction. Although her female protagonists are well aware of their own potentials, they do not easily surrender to the circumstances. However, somewhere their feminine self takes them near to the age old traditional values where marriage is preferred to live-in-relationship. The quest for identity is one of the most striking and remarkable feature of her novels. She is very successful in portraying different facets of womanhood in all her multitasking abilities and special sensitivity to handle the mundane of life. Her greatest skill lies in depicting real to life characters wherein she surpasses almost all her contemporary women writers.

In Manju Kapur's female protagonists, the researcher observes the emergence of new women. They do not want to be puppets for others to act as per their wish. They challenge patriarchal notions that cause the subjugation of women. Her women are ready to act as per their wish and on their own. They fight for independence. Manju Kapur has given more importance to education therefore her protagonists try to assert their identity through education. They lead their lives on their own and as per their wish. They are brave enough to take responsibilities not only of their husband and children but beyond them. They are not mute protesters. They are courageous, free, indomitable and persevering. They believe in actions. However, they are unfortunate. Because when they dare to cross one patriarchal threshold, they are caught into another, where their free spirits are curbed and all they do is adjustment, compromise and adaptation. The conflict of the roots of imagination and sensibility is brought out well in her novels.

She also describes the transforming image through her female characters. Her female characters move away from conventional representations where women were depicted as suffering, submissive and unselfish. Her women are self-possessed, self-assured and ambitious females. They strive to aware the society of their desires, aspirations and their longing to establish their uniqueness. Her female protagonists

value education and don't forget to admit the fact that education is an important means to gain self-confidence and financial independence. They seek personal autonomy. They want to hold the reigns of their life in their own hands. They refuse to submit to the orders of the stereotyped emotionless patriarchal society. Kapur writes her novels keeping the psyche of these New Indian Women in her mind. Each and every novel of her is a protest against the age-old hypocrisies that are eating away the foundation of development in our society. Her female protagonists are simple citizens. They try to safeguard their individualism, their rights, their source of happiness. In their vocation, they in this course have to struggle hard sometimes have to break away from the institution of marriage and leave their homes. They run for their buses, trains, cars, and fight for their hopes, ambitions, and aspirations. They don't take back even if they are sometimes wounded, bruised or battered.

## ***5.2 Difficult Daughters***

### **5.2.1 Image of Woman**

This novel is a tale about the female protagonist, Virmati. It is written against pre-independence as well as pre-partition setting of India. The female protagonist is a young girl born in Amritsar, Punjab. She is born and brought up into ascetic and high minded family from Punjab. She does not want to lead and carry on her mother's traditional ways of thinking and living. She goes to study in Lahore rejecting the confinement of her mother's world which revolved around home eases, wedding and child-bearing. Virmati is always reminded by her mother that the duty of every girl is to get married but being influenced and motivated by her cousin sister Shakuntala, Virmati becomes rebellious and tries to lead a life of liberated woman in her own way. Kasturi, Virmati's mother has conservative and patriarchal ideas. However, Virmati is not ready to follow her mother's conservative and patriarchal ideas. Her name itself is suggestive of her braveness and stubbornness. No doubt, she tries to live inside an ethical code but destiny resolves otherwise. Despite her resolution and pain, she was still considered to be the black sheep of the family

She refuses to accept the groom chosen by her family and attempts suicide. However, she is saved by her grandfather's servants. Then she declares that she does not like the boy whom her parents want her to marry. Later on when her parents come

to know about Virmati's love affair with Professor Harish, her mother tries to persuade her but she pays no attention to her mother's words. As a result, she is confined in to the godown. In the course of time, she expresses her desire to pursue higher studies and follow the lines of her cousin Shakuntala. For her, education signifies an escape from the reproaches of her family and freedom from her mother's control. Virmati, the so-called difficult daughter of the family, represent the evolving consciousness of 'The New Woman' of the forties. But Virmati is not serious about securing education and professional independence for her own sake. She seeks it as a respite to escape from the pressures of the illicit love relationship. Virmati rebels against her mother's expectations and left for Lahore. Though she says that she has left to study in Lahore, it was not true. The fact is that she wants to find respite from the professor. Virmati desperately seeks an escape from her meaningless life and thinks that pursuit of higher education might enable her to do so. She desires an independent life like that of Shakuntala. Though she tries to forget the professor and also to remain away from her home, she succumbs to his passionate demands. Consequently, she realizes that she has become pregnant and is left with no other alternative than to abort. She regrets the fact that she who has come to Lahore for expanding her mental horizons has done nothing. She knows that the professor would not provide any support to her in her hours of crisis.

The span of her life which she spends at Nahan is the most joyful and possibly the greatest fruitful span of her life. She was there the headmistress of a girls' school. She roughly attains the sovereignty over her life, which she has desired all along. She finally gets there her own space to live in. Virmati has challenged her traditional mother's ethics and values therefore she can be seen as representative of new woman. But she is unable to live up to it wholly. No doubt she represents the strength of new woman in India as she proclaims her identity and longs for education. Unfortunately, she does not succeed in showing her mental strength in love. She is trapped in tornado of improper desire towards the Oxford returned English lecturer. He is already married and has a child. Resultantly, there is a struggle in the mind of the female protagonist. There is the unsettled contradiction about the female protagonist Virmati. On one hand, she is very strong and has strong will power and can resist all kinds of social and family pressures, but on the other hand, she is very weak, because she just cannot kick the professor out of her life.

Virmati, in her quest for identity, rebels against her family tradition. Inner need in Virmati compels her to feel loved as an individual rather than as a responsible daughter. The very title of the novel *Difficult Daughters* is also very suggestive. It subtly alludes to the patriarchal convention that a woman, who undertakes a quest for an individual identity, is branded as a difficult daughter by the family and the society as well. Virmati, the female protagonist, succeeds in flouting all man-created limitations. However, there are definite primacies so intensely rooted within her that she struggles to come out through the fetters. In the course of the story, she develops from an inexperienced girl to a female who has learnt by grief and through knowledge the harsh reality of life. The novelist has mirrored India's conquest against the colonial rulers through female protagonist's life. No doubt, India achieved independence from British rule but India had to pay for it. It is achieved at the cost of division of India into two countries and racial hatred between two communities. In the same way, Virmati is also triumphant. She succeeds in breaking the long-standing fetters of male-controlled society. She succeeds in a country like India where conventions are of great importance. However, she also has to pay for it. She could do it just because of her patience to stand for mental anguish and endless fight.

### **5.2.2 Virmati's Quest for Self-identity**

Virmati, the female protagonist is a woman caught in the conflict between the lust of the skin and a longing to participate in the political and rational activities of the day. She rebels against tradition and defies the age old norms of patriarchal construct therefore she is termed as difficult daughter. She is the eldest daughter of Kasturi and Suraj Prakash. Kasturi had eleven children and Virmati being the eldest among them is haggard into household work. She becomes the mother to all her sisters and brothers. She cares for them as well as she bosses over them. She has to protect herself from the comments of an aunt. Therefore, it is interesting to see how a young girl reacts to such pressures in her life, and how she manages them. She is always harassed and tired due to her weary domestic chores. Torn between her household work and responsibilities and her love for studies, she turns into a bad tempered girl. Because of the whole burden of the household work and duty to look after her siblings, she does not do well in her studies and fails. As an ideal feminine model of daughter, she receives her part without any queries. Though from inside she sensed

muffled, she never raised up her voice. She thought if she does so then it would be unconventionality on her part. Her parents decide to marry her to an engineer. She accepts it as her fate, but due to death in Inderjeet's family, marriage gets postponed for a year.

During that year, Virmati happens to pass her FA Exam and eventually she says no to marry. Another development also takes place during this period. She falls in love with the professor, Harish. He is already a married man. He develops a close association with Virmati and there are regular meetings between them. When Virmati denies for marriage, professor insists her to remain firm.

*“Darling Vir..... You must be firm. I know how difficult it is for you, but you must be firm.....”<sup>1</sup>*

But Virmati is unable to understand as to how things will be all right. She is in a hopeless situation. She becomes mentally disturbed and goes to Tarashika to drown herself and to commit suicide. But she is saved by her grandfather's servant and hence returns to her house. When asked by family members, Virmati declares that she does not like the boy and wants to study further.

Once, Virmati accompanies her mother to Dalhousie to take care of her failing health and there she meets her cousin Shakuntala. She is impressed by Shakuntala's spirited, independent and defiant nature. It plants the seed of inspiration in her. She wishes to be like her cousin. While taking an evening walk Shakuntala tells Virmati that there is abundant gratification in leading one's own life. It is also very pleasurable to be independent. However, in reality the people in the house don't understand this truth. In this way, Shakuntala plants seeds of aspiration in Virmati. She instigates Virmati to lead her own life in her own way and to be independent. Virmati also secretly nurtures the desire of being autonomous and leading a life of her own. She desired her life to go beyond monotonous business of looking after better half and procreating. She knew if she wanted to be free she needs to look outside the family. She thinks:

*“One has to look outside. To education. Freedom and the bright lights of Lahore colleges.”<sup>2</sup>*

Her mother looks at education as evil force that is why she doesn't want Virmati to study further. In reality, Kasturi was the embodiment of traditional women in male-controlled construct. One day, when Virmati shows her desire to study, her mother, Kasturi in reproaching tone says that:

*“Leave your studies if it is going to make you bad tempered with your family. You are forgetting what comes first.”<sup>3</sup>*

Due to her contemporary viewpoint, she falls prey to brutality. Kasturi is the carrier of tradition and is under ‘psychological slavery’ in the patriarchal structure. She is angry with Virmati and in anger she holds Virmati by the locks and booms her head against the partition. She also abuses and curses her.

*“What crimes did she entrust in my last life that she must be cursed with a daughter like you in this one?”<sup>4</sup>.*

It is very obvious from this that in Indian male-controlled society male female discrimination is done. Male child is shown soft corner in every respect, may it be education or establishing own identity or autonomy. If some female dares, any one of this, she is threatened with violence. She is not free to establish her own identity. In this battle against the endorsed role she not only clears her F. A. exam but also enters A.S College which was the bastion of male learning. She asserts herself not only through education but also through her choice of life partner. It is during her years in A.S College that she develops feelings for Harish, professor in her college and a tenant at her place. Harish, being already married and father of children becomes the most unsuitable choice on the part of Virmati. In a way the relationship between Virmati and Harish is an illegitimate relationship. It leads her to commit suicide because it becomes difficult for Virmati to define her position in her family as well as in professor's. She is locked up by her parents. Meanwhile Indumati her younger sister marries Inderjeet to save the name of family.

When Virmati learns that the professor's wife Ganga is pregnant, she realizes the hopelessness of her illicit love. She cuts the professor in a very determined manner. She feels cheated because professor is not loyal to her. On one hand, he professes his love for her and on the other hand he makes his wife pregnant. She feels



he is not dependable person. Therefore, she very decisively cuts him off by saying that:

*“You think you can do what you like so long as you go on saying you love.”<sup>5</sup>*

Virmati is bold enough and therefore doesn't hesitate to solve her problem boldly and in her way. She does not hesitate to defy the age-old traditions of submissiveness of a woman. It is during her imprisonment she gets lot of leisurely time to ponder and think. There, she tries to find her, self. Her thoughts are as follows:

*“My fate is cast, and I am free now. I feel far more peaceful in the godown than I did in the days before I went to river.”<sup>6</sup>*

These are the words which define her state of mind. They also suggest her will to move freely and to establish her own identity. She defies patriarchal notions that insist on women towards domesticity and she asserts her individuality. She attempts to seek self-reliance through education. She is not a silent rebel, but bold, outspoken, determined, and action oriented. She becomes aware that she cannot rely on Harish to sort out the household state of affairs. Therefore, she proceeds to undertake it on her own. Later, she very decisively and coolly shuns the professor, ignoring his plea and keeps the reins in her hand. She displays marvelous strength of mind in overcoming her rejection. She burns the professor's letters in a very unwavering and composed manner. It indicates that she firmly wants to close the chapter and look forward to a meaningful life in Lahore. First, she rebels against her family's patriarchal construct and then finds herself in another patriarchal construct created by Harish. It is here that she succumbs to her passion and sexual pleasure losing her modesty. It is loss of virginity which pricks her consciousness.

According to feminist viewpoint, this erotic act of Virmati may be observed as her autonomy and proclamation of her choice. She crosses the conventional communal confines as per her determination, but this lands her up in prenatal period before marriage. She comes to Lahore to widen her prospects, however, unfortunately she cannot get rid from professor's love and gets involved in hopeless love, dubious wedding and becomes pregnant before marriage. The original stubborn and assertive self of Virmati, slowly but surely, vanishes into sweet words of Harish. He motivates

her from the beginning of their infatuation for each other and controls her all actions. At the time of abortion, she wants him to be on her side but he deliberately keeps himself away from the happenings. She on her own gets herself under the blade to save her from the disgrace that her autonomy has caused her.

She meets the professor regularly even after she understands that he is using her. She asks him again and again for marriage but he never assures her in this matter. The most fruitful period in her life is at Nahan where she steered her life like an unrestricted feathered friend and with nothing to care about. Her work as a headmistress in girls' school earned her salary and provided her with financial freedom. There she could attain highest amount of control over her life and could lead peaceful life. She receives appreciation there. She was free to take on and carry on her responsibilities. Her life becomes meaningful and gets new meaning. Though there were no family members, relatives and friends, her life was pleasant one as she had attained autonomy.

### **5.2.3 Husband and Wife Relationship**

The relationship between Virmati and Harish can be divided into two phases first as a lover and beloved phase and the second as husband and wife phase. In both the phases Professor Harish proves to be the member of male dominated patriarchal society and tries to keep Virmati, the female protagonist, under his control. He never allows her to assert her identity.

Virmati in her parental house is continuously under pressure because of her duty to look after her siblings, her domestic odd jobs. She is constantly strained and exhausted of all this. She is in a dilemma between her domestic tasks and her urge for education. She is unable to decide as to what she must give preference. Therefore, she turns into an ill-tempered girl. During her childhood, she gets very little of love from her parents. Being elder than other siblings, she has to look after them. She craved for love and never got it. At that time, Professor Harish came in her life with his promises of love. She was attracted to him because of his sweet words and language from English literature. They met in the classroom for the first time. The professor was impressed by the beauty of Virmati she looked like a flower to him. One day, she was gazing at him very keenly and it aroused a passion of love for her in the professor's

mind. However, it was because she was suffering from shortsightedness. When Harish comes to know that he takes her to the eye hospital. After checking her eyes, the doctor advises her to wear glasses. She does so and she appears to professor like “*more studious and flower like and appealing*”.<sup>7</sup>

When Virmati met the professor for the first time, he had played sweetened tunes for her. She was also pleased to hear that music and the professor felt compensated. Virmati felt extremely enlightened by the liberal mindedness of the professor. She had an impression that Harish is very noble person because he through his talk created the impression that he is really concerned about woman education. After that, they kept on meeting each other informally and in the course of time the frequency of their meetings augmented.

This sustained for quite some time and then the wish to own Virmati for himself aroused in the mind of the professor. Both of them had a feeling of love and affection for each other. Virmati’s impression was that she was getting genuine and durable love from the professor. But the professor was already married, and therefore, the track of love between them never went smoothly. Besides, there were societal barriers and ethical difficulties that tagged their love as ‘illicit love’.

The major portion of the novel is devoted to the affair between Virmati and Harish. We see the professor continues to profess his love for Virmati and writes love letters to her. His letters are full of poetry. His letters give impression of true love. In one of his letters he writes:

*“The koel is singing of its mate, a pair of squirrels is running up and down the jamun tree in the corner of the hedge.”*<sup>8</sup>

Prof. Harish gradually gains complete control over her mind. On professor’s insistence, Virmati refuses to marry the man selected by her family but when she meets professor in this connection she gets no suggestion from him. Therefore, she understands that she cannot depend on the professor to solve her domestic problems and she will have to solve them herself. She decides to commit suicide and tries to drown herself into the canal Tarsikka but is saved. When asked by the family members for her act she tells them that she still wants to study further. She also tells them that she does not want to marry Inderjeet as he was not the boy she liked. For

this she is locked up in the godown. Indumati her younger sister marries Inderjeet to save the name of the family.

After that when Virmati comes to know that Professor's wife is pregnant, she is inconsolable. She is placed in the hopeless position. She feels cheated by the professor. In fact, the professor is dishonest to Virmati. The Professor is seen quite self-centered. He maintains a relation with his wife, Ganga, as well as with Virmati. Therefore, she makes up her mind not to interlude between the Professor and his wife. She decides to uphold her family traditions. She also decides to forget the Professor and to start a fresh, new life. She decides to go to Lahore to pursue the B.T. course. Her mother Kasturi protests strongly against it. In spite of her mother's protest, she decides to give new directions to her life and make a new beginning. She goes to Lahore accompanied by her mother Kasturi and seeks admission in RBSL College.

Prof. Harish not only follows her there at Lahore but also compels her to be the object of his sexual desires. Harish exploits Virmati. He bestows his love profusely on Virmati. It is ironic that he interprets the social traditions to suit his ease. He is frequently requested by Virmati to marry her but he is reluctant as he wishes to keep her as his co-wife. He tries to console her and tells her that a co-wife is, then, a part of social tradition. He just seems to be another hypocrite steeped in patriarchal traditions.

The meetings between Prof. Harish Chandra and Virmati in Lahore bring many changes in Virmati's life. She gets involved in a physical relationship with the Professor. It exposes her weak self. She gets pregnant. It exhausts her emotional stoutness. She becomes defenseless. Therefore, she terminates her child. She does it only out of fear of society in which she has to live. She does not want to become an unmarried mother. In the orthodox and traditional society like India, it is quite impossible to go in such direction. In India any kind of relationship between man and woman apart from the husband-wife relationship is not acceptable.

Being already married and father of a child, the professor has his family's responsibility. Therefore, he hesitates to come forward to marry Virmati. But Virmati is associated to the professor physically and emotionally. Hence, she comes forward and does not hesitate to establish physical relationship with the professor. It is not her

physical surrender because she is so deeply attached to that professor that she is unable to understand what is wrong and what is right. But it is very clear that the professor is certainly exploiting the physical compulsions of Virmati. It is quite ironical that the teacher, who should be the icon of high kind of morality and teaching, compels a girl like Virmati to marry a person like him who is already married. In the modern age such kind of relationships between man and woman are very common. However, Virmati is well aware that such kind of relationship is not approved by the society in which they live. But the professor tries to console her:

*“Virus, I love you more than you love me, that much is obvious.....It has been almost six months - I can think of nothing else and here you torture me with your questions and answers!”<sup>9</sup>*

Virmati is aware of her existence and her limitations, therefore, in the beginning, she is not ready to accept the sexual advances of the professor. But she is so obsessed with that man that she could not decide what to do and what not to do. She does not raise any question because her own lust has been fulfilled. In fact, it is the problem of a large number of girls and women who are easily caught in the cobweb of men who are ready to exploit the situation. Virmati's situation is same in her relationship with the professor. It is not love but the sexual need that plays the dominating role in the relationship between Virmati and the professor. After the sexual intercourse, the professor tries to console her and normalize the situation. He utters her name repeatedly:

*“Virus, Virus, Virus, I love you my sweetest darling.”<sup>10</sup>*

Virmati for the first time spends the whole night with the professor. She dares too much. She goes beyond the family tradition. She crosses the boundary of morality. She becomes blind. She fails to decide what is right and what is wrong. Her attachment with the professor is more passionate than anything else. Virmati feels pleasure in the company of the professor. No doubt, she is also aware of her existence. She knows that her relationship with the professor is totally immoral and unacceptable.

Finally, after lot of turns, the lecturer, Harish becomes ready to admit Virmati as his second wife. Though he has a dread in his mind, he gets married to Virmati.

Virmati is also not exception to that she has also fear in her mind. She feels that she will be blamed by the members of her natal family and no one will let her off. She also thinks that the course of denunciation that is underway from Tarashika incident will be finished. However, she is firm to face all the consequences of her deed of embracing the already marital man. She is prepared to accept if the family members “*damn*”<sup>11</sup> her. She does not care if her family rejects her. Her final goal is to get married to the Professor and create a space for herself in his family. She feels that her marriage would bring calm and comfort but she is thoroughly mistaken. Though Virmati is educated yet she thinks on the lines of patriarchal construct. Therefore, she has confidence in that her partner would be the whole thing to her and she would be contented to be the spouse of Prof. Harish. However, her belief does not last long. Because when Virmati reaches home with Harish, Giridhar (the Professor’s son) remarks:

*“Who is this gandhi lady? Send her away.”*<sup>12</sup>

Virmati begins to live in the house of Harish as his second wife. However, she does not find any gratification in this life. She finds pressed in between two impossible things one is her desire for pleasure and contentment and the other being moral endorsement of family members and the general public. Her happiness of getting married to the Professor is short-lived. When Virmati grasps the reality, she feels that she has done mistake by marrying Harish. She should have given a thought to the far-reaching effects that her marriage would have. We see the Professor does not take any measure to defend her instead he says,

*“It will take time to adjust, dearest. Naturally, you feel strange.”*<sup>13</sup>

After arriving in the professor’s house as his second wife, Virmati has to learn adjustment. In no time, she realizes that she is unwanted by the members of Harish’s family. Even though Ganga, Harish’s first wife does not speak the words of dissatisfaction, but her anger and her aggression and anguish are visible on her face. She and professor’s mother force Virmati to lead an oppressive life in the constricted walls of the house. Therefore, life for Virmati has become a burden.

Though she is sophisticated and learned, she thinks like a characteristic Indian female. She registers her protest to Harish that she is deprived of her domestic duties.

She is not allowed to wash-down his clothes. Therefore she feels that she is not accepted as Harish's wife. That time Harish speaks very delicately to her and tries to cool down. He says that she is in the house not as a washer woman but as a buddy. *"I don't want a washerwoman. I want a companion."*<sup>14</sup>

Virmati is estranged from her parental family because of her marriage with Harish. However, she couldn't avoid facing her natal family members. Whenever her mother, Kasturi happens to come across her used to irritate at the view of Virmati. One day, she throws her chappal to hit Virmati but Virmati fortunately bows and chappal hits her on her back. This incident makes her think that she is totally estranged from her blood relation. Ganga also gives her the treatment of an outsider because she thinks that Virmati has seized her rights. Virmati is happy in the house only when Harish is in the house. When Harish is not in the house, she suffers from the feeling of an outsider. She feels out casted. One day, she, being bored with all this, gathers courage and goes into the kitchen but she is not welcomed there instead there was a quarrel. Ganga, in order to purify pots and pans touched by Virmati, washes them again. Therefore, the female protagonist, Virmati imagines that she is not going to have any place for her in the kitchen. *"It was clear that not an inch of that territory was going to be yielded."*<sup>15</sup>

Later, there is a miscarriage. Virmati is sad and thinks God is punishing her for her deeds. The death of her father and grandfather change her drastically. She becomes passive. She is very miserable and frustrated for all this. However, Harish is not concerned about her misery and agony. Virmati has to undergo physical and mental torture. She keeps herself mum and becomes reticent. She becomes unhappy. Then, Prof. Harish, in order to make her feel comfortable and bring her out of her isolation sends her to Lahore to study an M.A. in the subject Philosophy. When Ganga comes to know this, she becomes very happy because henceforth Virmati will not be there to compete with her.

Finally, Virmati leaves for Lahore and she is able to attain her autonomy which she could not enjoy in Prof. Harish's house. One day, Swarnalata offers Virmati to participate in the protest against the Draft Hindu Code Bill, however, Virmati declines it by saying that Harish will not like it. This refusal is clear indication of Virmati's weakness in expressing her independence. Here in Amritsar,

Harish is facing different problems. The first one is that it is becoming more and more difficult for him to continue to live without Virmati and the second is that he has to maintain two families and it is rather expensive. Therefore, he urges Virmati to return to Amritsar. When Virmati refuses to come back, Harish is hurt and he tries to ignore Virmati and stands in support of his first wife, Ganga. Virmati cannot tolerate it and becomes frustrated. Still she takes a decision to stay at Lahore and improve her result. However, she fails to remain firm and could not stick to her decision for a long time. There is turbulence owing to Partition. Harish's family has to shift to Kanpur and he is left unaccompanied in Amritsar. Therefore, the circumstance compels Virmati to return to home. Here for the first time, Virmati starts her life of a housewife. She is now comfortable and happy as she has been fighting for this place in Harish's house since her marriage with him. She is now sturdy as well as self-assured in her husband's residence. Then she gives birth to a girl baby and proposes her name as 'Bharati'. However, Harish declines it and desires to name her as Ida as per his wish. The meaning of Ida is: "*a new slate, and a blank beginning.*"<sup>16</sup> In this case also, Harish proves to be the product of patriarchal construct. He tries to show Virmati that it is his right to name their child and not Virmati's. He tries to show his superiority over Virmati.

#### **5.2.4 Feminine Sensibility**

Virmati's life history is told by her daughter Ida. From her description, the reader comes to know every detail of Virmati's life which was also preserved as clandestine from Ida. Her mother, Virmati is a young Panjabi girl. She comes from a rigid and conventional family of Amritsar. She is nurtured and is always told that the onus of every daughter is to get married. She is also constantly told that a girl is not supposed to learn and to do a job but is supposed to get married and leave happily in her husband's house. Virmati's parents have already negotiated with Inderjeet's parents and Virmati is betrothed to him. However Virmati happens to meet her cousin Shakuntala who is responsible for planting the seeds of ambition in Virmati. Virmati wants to lead life like her cousin. She powerfully wants to be self-governing and lead a life with full autonomy. She also wants to lead her life in her own way. She does not wish to shoulder only the household duties but she wants to go beyond these responsibilities. Because of this Virmati and her mother were not on good terms.



Kasturi does not like her daughters thinking and craving for freedom and autonomy. Kasturi also as a representative of orthodoxy, always tries to keep Virmati under pressure of patriarchy and always rebukes her. As a result Virmati thinks that it is of no use to look for solutions inside the house but she will have to look outside. She is ready to fight against her mother Kasturi for this.

Then, Virmati first passes her FA and seeks admission in A. S. College. There she is impressed by the eloquence of Prof. Harish and falls in love with him. As he was already married, she is trapped in the whirlwind of illogical passion for Prof. Harish. She has the rudeness to discard matrimony. She first endeavors perversity and then accepts imprisonment. When she learns about the prenatal period of Ganga, Harish's first wife, she identifies the hopelessness of her unlawful love. Initially, she does not trust. She simply is not ready to believe that a man who confesses his love for her can make his wife heavy with child. She is shocked therefore she very conclusively and abruptly slashes him. Then she leaves Amritsar and moves to Lahore for higher education.

The researcher, consequently, observes the emergence of a 'New Woman' Virmati who does not wish to be a puppet for others to move as per their wish. She endeavors to challenge notions of male-controlled system that push a female towards submissiveness. She proclaims her autonomy and anticipates independence through learning. She is not a mute insurgent but is courageous, honest and unyielding. She is well-aware that she cannot put her faith in Harish to resolve the familial circumstance and therefore she decides to face and solve it herself. Swarnalata, her room partner in the hostel is her role model hence she wishes to be like her. She desires to get involved in the meaningful actions linked with freedom fight and women's liberation with Swarnalata. However, she is dependent on Prof. Harish who constantly avoids the topic of wedding ceremony and also prevents her doing something as per her wish. He imposes his likes and dislikes on her. Virmati is in a wretched condition. She says:

*"..... when Harish is here, I stop thinking of other things. And when he is not here, all I do is wait for him to come."*<sup>17</sup>

Once, she happens to attend Punjab Women's Conference. There she is astonished to see that the women in that conference have larger lives. The women there are moving freely and enjoying the autonomy which Virmati could not. She wishes to have that freedom and autonomy for her. Instead of enjoying this freedom she is wasting her time in waiting for the professor. Though she knows that the professor has wronged her many times and she has become weak because of her relationship with the professor, she is helpless. She knows very well that she is being used by him. Because of him she gets into difficulty but the tragedy is that when she is in difficulty the professor is not there to save her from it. Even when she undergoes the abortion, he deliberately keeps himself away. Even later on when the professor eventually marries her very reluctantly, she is given a pariah status. She is compelled to face exclusion from hearth. It is the area only of the professor's first wife, Ganga. Virmati lives in a confined space and is forced to surrender.

Thus, though she goes to cross one masculine edge, she is trapped in to another where her unrestricted spirit is restricted and all she does is adjustment, negotiation and adaptation. In Virmati we find the incipient New Woman who is sensible, meditative, sophisticated and desires to carve a career for her. Doubtlessly, to some extent she even conveys a personal vision of womanhood by violating current social restrictions. However, she lacks self-assurance, restraint, and judiciousness. Moreover, she is spiritually restrained with a basic necessity to be fervently and rationally reliant on a loftier force.

### **5.2.5 Revolt against Patriarchy and Social Norms**

Virmati is a woman torn between opposite forces of society. She has passionate desire to break that silence. She does her best to break that silence and to register her protest against social customs and norms but social norms are cruel enough to allow her to succeed. The story tells that how Virmati is torn between her family duties, the desire for education and elicit love. No doubt Virmati succeeds in breaking all manmade boundaries but there are certain polarities so deeply rooted within her that she struggles to shake through the shackles. She grows up from a native girl to a woman matured by suffering and through experience. Throughout the novel, she is found in the quest for true love, quest for freedom, quest for the realization of the self..... the quest does not stop. She fights and fights to get what

she wants, but in the process of struggle to express herself she loses a significant part of herself and realizes insignificance of things.

Virmati, being liberal woman, is not going to suppress her wish to obtain an advanced educational degree in life. In order to continue her advanced studies, she is ready to expense her family and break all norms of male-dominated society. Not only that, her decision to marry a man with a wife and children is a clear defiance of the conventions of the society to which she belongs. A woman is at liberty to love and select her companion. This very liberty of female cannot be interrogated. She does not wish others to perceive the rites and customs like burials of our conviction and culture. She expresses her desire to donate her dead body. Ida, her daughter makes clear her mother's wish and she puts it as:

*“When I die she said to me, I want my body donated..... when I die I want no shor-sharr. I want no one called, no one informed.”<sup>18</sup>*

It is clear that she wants to break the silence and to defy the so called customs and rituals of the society. She refuses to submit the dictates of male dominated society. Throughout the novel Virmati fights against taboos, social restrictions and manmade code of conduct in a traditional society. She responds boldly to pressures and oppressions of patriarchal culture where marriage is seen only as a compromise.

Virmati is a young Punjabi girl. She is born and nurtured in an austere household of Amritsar. Her mother is constantly behind her prompting her that it is the duty of every girl to marry somebody and get settled. However, Virmati discards to marry an engineer. Though persisted and pressed by her parents, she refuses to marry Inderjeet and says no. In a patriarchal culture like India, it is tolerable if a boy says no to a girl, however, it is not tolerable if a girl says no to a boy. She is bound to be labeled as stubborn.

There is the conflict between convention and modernism. It is represented through the Virmati's fight against male-dominance. She stands for a new woman. Like a new woman, she is contemporary and fights against conventional norms and values of patriarchal society. She asserts her individuality, challenges patriarchy and registers her protest against family and culture. She tries to cross the boundaries of male dominated construct.

Manju Kapur has made an unforgettable contribution to the struggle of Indian women against the taboos and customs, in the form of her present novel. The novel focuses on the contaminated atmosphere, demeaning human ethics and the brutalities of man against the women. Since ages not known, Indian woman has been inefficiently trying to make her individual room in a male-controlled society. One of the famous critics O. P. Dwivedi calls this novel “*a female Bildungsroman novel*”<sup>19</sup>. According to him the novel describes Virmati’s life from infancy to adulthood – both substantially and psychologically. Kapur openly admits during one of her interview that the character of Virmati is based on her own mother:

*“Virmati (from Difficult Daughters) was, in a way, inspired by my mother.”*<sup>20</sup>

In this novel, there are three women characters. Each of them represents different generation. These three women are Kasturi, Virmati, and Ida. The intermediate stage of convention and modernism is expounded through the depiction of these women. Virmati is the central figure of the novel. Kasturi is the grandmother of Ida and Virmati is the mother of Ida. Kasturi Virmati’s mother and Ida’s grandmother is a conventional woman, therefore, she sticks up to the patriarchy enthusiastically and unreservedly. Virmati refuses to surrender to male domination and demonstrates against her subdual by the society and tries to seek autonomous existence. Ida the granddaughter of Kasturi and daughter of Virmati walks on two steps ahead of Kasturi and one step ahead of Virmati. She not only defies the tradition but also wholly refuses to bend in front of patriarchal society. Therefore, none of them are on good terms with their own mother. According to Dwivedi:

*“Each of these daughters never share a happy relationship with their respective mothers and always remain alienate.”*<sup>21</sup>

Shakuntala and Swarnalata are the other two woman characters who are also worthy of mention. The former is cousin and the latter is roomie of the female protagonist. Both epitomize the emergent new female that persists in Indian English fiction as the liberated female confrontational. Shakuntala from the start seems to be representative of a contemporary and progressive lady. She not only studies and teaches but also participates actively in the political-Gandhian movement. She shares her unconventional way of life with her friends. She explains the activities of her

group to Virmati. On other hand Swarnalata, gets what she wants. She does not have to compromise very much. She is a very stanch activist. Even her marriage makes no difference for her. She is free to participate actively in the political activities as she used to before marriage.

Virmati's mother, Kasturi epitomizes the conventional Indian housewife, who serves her family members and admits her destiny as a wife, a mother and a daughter-in-law. She is happy to deliver children. She is also happy to carry out her familial duties and responsibilities without any grudge. She observes conventional ethics set by the masculine culture. Though she is a learned lady yet entirely relies on her husband for her identity. She thinks that the girls should be given only fundamental education which will help them in the future to look after their family and kids.

### **5.3 A Married Woman**

#### **5.3.1 Image of Woman**

Astha, the only daughter of her parents belongs to the middle class family. She is a sophisticated, learned, upper middle-class working woman. Like real middle class people, her parents are anxious about her education, personality and wedding. They consider it to be a burden. Therefore they constantly remind Astha about it.

*“Astha was brought up properly, as befits a woman, with large supplements of fear..... She was her parents' only child.”<sup>22</sup>*

Astha's parents want her to study the eligibility level of the requirement of marriage. But Astha insists on liberation from patriarchal social structure and thinking. She strongly protests against every cruelty inflicted on her under the pretext of religion or morality. As she is her parents' only child, she is also a centre of a lot of expectations. Her father always pinches her to do hard work in her studies. But his purpose behind it is not to make her independent only. He thinks that if his daughter Astha will “sit for the IAS,” she will “find a good husband there.” It was not only her father who was worried about her marriage but her mother too. Her mother thinks and believes that if parents die without marrying their daughter they can't get peace. Astha's mother tells her:

*“.....when you are married, our responsibilities will be over.”<sup>23</sup>*

The female protagonist, Astha is the daughter of government servant and is living in the government accommodations in South Delhi with her parents. Her mother is conventional as well as traditional minded woman. She was worried about her daughter's wedding. She used to express her worry to Astha's father every now and then and hence they had taken every care and had brought Astha with utmost care and calculation. Thus they expected to get a good husband for their daughter. Her mother being conservative and orthodox believed in rites and rituals but Astha did not believe in any convention or tradition. Astha says, *“I don't believe in all that stuff.”<sup>24</sup>*

Astha strongly reacts to her mother in challenging the inequality of gender and sex. She boldly demands human rights and dignity for women who remained dumb and docile in the male dominated world. According to Sarah Moore Grimke, women have to face lot of mental and physical problems. They are deprived of their rights and compelled to live their lives according to the social and moral constraints. She says:

*“Man has subjugated woman to his will, used her as a means to promote his selfish gratification, to minister to his sensual pleasure.”<sup>25</sup>*

Astha represents the image of new woman who longs to have her own space in the conventional patriarchal society. Astha grows with the education that the enlightened parents can afford to give through school and college. Before her marriage, Astha was attracted towards Bunty. He is a young boy from another colony. Astha falls in love with Bunty at first sight. She is overwhelmed by the feeling of love. She is neither able to eat nor sleep or study. All this happen with her only. Bunty doesn't have any such feelings for her. Therefore, he doesn't make any sign of desire to talk to her or to see her. Astha has no choice but to be in men's shoes. It is common belief that it is men's business to follow, plan, woo and make advancement in love. This is inverted in the case of Astha. It is she who makes all the advancement first.

Her parents try their best to acquaint their daughter with Indian culture and tradition. The parents especially the mother, take every precaution to make sure that their daughter is on right track. The mother is conscious of the fact that Astha is young enough to get married. Despite the parents' effort to confine Astha to the boundary of tradition and culture, Astha has shown the sign, much earlier, that she

can't be caged. There are many examples of this. Astha refuses to meet a man whom her mother has invited to visit their home. Astha even lies about her visits and doings to her mother, like most of other girls who see boys. Moreover, she has physical relationship with Rohan whom she meets in the final year of her college.

After break up with Bunty, Astha is attached to Rohan emotionally and physically. She meets him in the final year of her college and develops feeling of love for him. She also has a physical relationship with him. But Rohan moves to Oxford for further studies and there ends this relationship. In this way Astha's both early love affairs end tragically. However, these affairs destabilize her but she learns the lesson of male exploitation. When her mother comes to know about her affair with Rohan, her parents tighten their surveillance. The mother asks her to read the shastras, the Gita, the Vedas, and the Upanishadas. Whenever her parents find her deviating from the trodden path of tradition and culture, they guide her and when needed they forced her to follow the trodden path.

The experience in both affairs leaves her both mentally and physically sick as she drifts through college to university. The beginning of the novel is conservative. It highlights conventions, customs and attitudes of Indian middle class towards marriage. Astha's mother is very conventional and anxious about her daughter's marriage. The novelist successfully creates the ambience in which the plot of the novel moves further. Manju Kapur very craftily creates an atmosphere of displeasure around Astha. Astha the female protagonist rebels when she finds her life is being manipulated. It is Rohan who creates the first commotion of feeling and intimacy in their drive in the car. However, Astha soon realizes the sheer fascination of teenager love when Rohan leaves for abroad to shape a better career for himself. Astha gets married to Hemant and the genuine story of Astha begins. She realizes the actual meaning of marriage during their journey to Kashmir for honeymoon. During honeymoon, Hemant pays much attention to Astha, gives her everything that she wishes. He provides her security. Her every wish is fulfilled. She gets that everything a married woman longs for. Therefore, she was also full of love for Hemant.

*"Astha's heart was as full of love as the lake was full of water."*<sup>26</sup>

They come back to Delhi after the honeymoon. Astha immediately fits herself in the role of daughter-in-law and wife. She experiments in the kitchen to make new dishes and serve the members of the family. In one sense it is the service of love and marriage. She does everything as a genuine housewife. She treats Hemant's clothes with reverence. She slides each shirt in his drawers a quarter centimeter out from the one above so they are easily visible. She mends all the tiny holes in his socks. She arranges his pants on cloth-wrapped hangers to save them from getting creased. She visits and shops in the morning with her mother-in-law. She enjoys the memory of the last night and eagerly waits for the night to come. Therefore, she never gets bored. She keeps herself busy all the time in these activities. Hence, her conjugal life with Hemant, an America-returned Delhi businessman is running smooth. The couple has two children, a son Himanshu and a daughter, Anuradha.

She makes herself busy in the matrimonial ecstasy and in the gratification that she may offer to her partner. Astha expends year after year of her married life and gets sunk herself into oblivion. She is helped in her housework by her in-laws and the important thing was that her in-laws were not expecting much from her. Most of the housework is done by the servants and Astha has to supervise only. As a result, there was lot of free time left for Astha. During her free time, she has only one work that is to wait for Hemant. In the course of time, she is bored with it and begins to suffer from restlessness. Therefore, very soon, she happens to face the tediousness and boredom in her matrimonial life. She is tired of fluctuations and boredom in her nuptial life.

*"A few months and dullness began to taint Astha's new life."*<sup>27</sup>

After marriage, anyhow Astha's life was running very smoothly. But it is the entry of Aijaz that has given birth to repression and anguish in her life once again. Astha has a strong desire for sex and physical relationship from the very beginning. And her husband, Hemant doesn't seem to be aware of this fact. So when Aijaz dies, it is the power of the hidden love dwelling in the heart of Astha, which takes her to the condolence meeting held at Constitution Club. She also takes active part in procession, rallies and Manch related to Aijaz, forgetting the rules and regulations of a middle class family and of a married woman. She ignores her responsibilities not



only towards her husband, children and family but she doesn't care for her health also. She ignores the warnings of her husband. He says:

*"You seem to forget that your place as a decent family woman is in the home, and not on the streets."*<sup>28</sup>

Astha in her life of forty years has gone through varied optimisms and glooms, commendations and denials, and acknowledgments and hindrances. As she belongs and being brought up in middle class standards, she relishes her emotional ecstasy for a long time. But at certain point in her life, she begins to sense that she unquestionably has something less in her life. She is missing something in her life. She begins to grieve from a sense of insufficiency. She also feels oppressed and agonized. It is further aggravated by her involvement into the outside world of revolt and demonstration. However, she is not able to find the permanent solution for it. Whatever alternative she sticks to turns to be temporary and invalid from inside her. It fails to give her respite. In the course of time, Astha's career apprehensions and domestic strains make her bad tempered. To overcome this, she begins to sketch and write poetry but in these also she finds no retreat and in the end she gives up.

Astha's mother after selling plots hands over the money she received to her son-in-law, Hemant to put into some scheme. She perhaps thinks that she herself or her daughter being women don't have ability to manage money matters. Astha doesn't like it and, therefore, challenges it:

*"Really, Ma, don't you think women can be responsible for their own investments?"*<sup>29</sup>

The concept of self-governing communism is replicated in the character of Astha. She finds faults in her father-in-law and mother-in-law for nourishment of Hemant who fails to respect females and never feels necessity of them while taking important decisions. The traditional values of the masculine culture make Hemant behave as per his aspirations. He does not give treatment of equality to her better half. Even in financial matters, he does not feel the necessity to consult her.

Once, Astha while emptying the baggage of Hemant happens to find a condom in his bag. She is stunned by this and asks Hemant about it. He tries to persuade her

and tells her that girls are offered to corporate business persons time and again. He also tells her that he never accepts them. She is not satisfied with his answer. In fact, the discovery gives a huge jolt to her conjugal life. This discovery of a condom creates a giant wave in the marital life of Astha. Once, Hemant plans a family trip to Goa. He arranges tickets by the money earned through the sale of one of Astha's paintings. Astha wants to buy silver box with that money but Hemant crushes her wish down mercilessly. The tone of refusal hurts her. She is an earning woman. Therefore, she feels that she has got right to have her say on how some of their money is spent. She feels if she does not object when Hemant chooses to waste money on airline tickets then why she cannot buy a box she likes. Here one can clearly see the male dominance:

*“You earn!’ snorted Hemant. ‘What you earn, now that is really something, yes, that will pay for this holiday.’”<sup>30</sup>*

Astha's mother fails to offer any emotional comfort to her. She is now living under the influence of a Swamiji and trying to solve the riddles of life. She is trying to get divine illumination after the death of her husband. Astha tries to search a place for herself in the male dominated society. Civilization, ethics, principles, conventions are like burden to her. She is leading onward in an uncertain manner in the midst of persistent urbanization and the far reaching western influences. Her mother sells her land and moves to Rishikesh. Her mother's act is out of reach of Astha. The association of her mother with the Swamiji arouses many queries in her mind. She honestly feels that the visit to Rishikesh cannot solve the puzzle of life. She is surprised when her mother entrusts all the financial matters and a big part of the money to Hemant, as her father's legacy. She also feels humiliated to learn about the donation of her father's books to the library. Her desire to preserve some of the books as her father's memory remains unfulfilled. Then Astha's decision to go to Ayodhya for a demonstration against fundamentalism brings a turning point in her life. Her mother-in-law and her husband disapprove of her going.

Astha happens to come in contact with a social worker called Aijaz. He immediately realizes her aptitudes as an author and storyteller. Aijaz Akhtar Khan is a Muslim from U.P. He is married to Pipeelika Trivedi who is working in Ujala. He loves his wife Pipeelika as well as his activities. He organizes performance against the

communal concern the *Babri Masjid* issue. Astha is also very curious about the issue and she being the resident of Delhi, is intensely involved in the havoc. She is intimately connected with all the proceedings that take place during the pre-demolition period of *Babri Masjid*. Once, a street theatre group comes to her school to conduct a workshop. During the workshop Astha gets acquainted with Aijaz and a friendship develops between them. Aijaz dramatizes social issues like unemployment, poverty, communalism etc. Aijaz performs at schools, at factory gates, outside offices, at bus-stops. Astha is asked to write a script of the drama on Babri Masjid. She works hard and gets a lot of appreciation from him. They develop a very good relationship between them. Aijaz Khan is a thoughtful, communally devoted professor in history. He is a theatre-activist and founder of Street Theatre Troupe. Pipeelika is his wife. She is a Brahmin girl. Astha appreciate the couple for the ethics of their matrimonial life and irreligious visualization. Aijaz is a resourceful mastermind. He worked for the disliked folks and sorrows of under-age girls. Pipeelika marries a Muslim against her mother's desire. She challenged the society. Aijaz, the dramatist is the voice of wisdom and sanity and in spite of all the differences between him and Astha; he comes close to her and convinces her to act on his theory:

*"We have to create awareness. There may be differences of interpretation, it doesn't matter. If our players and our audience think for one moment about this issue, we have done our job."*<sup>31</sup>

One day, Aijaz as usual goes to a village with his troupe to perform. Unfortunately, he along with his troupe is caught by some anti-social people. They burnt Aijaz and his associates alive in a motor vehicle. Astha is not happy with her routine life as well as her husband. She is tired of Hemant's mechanical and repetitive love. At this time, Pipeelika makes entry in Astha's life. Through their friendship the novelist endeavors to present quite a new aspect of a marital woman. Both of them enjoy the pleasure of a strange love. The novelist describes in detail the love making of these two women. It is a lesbian love. In the beginning, Astha felt it strange to make love for a woman but in the course of time she gets used to:

*"Afterwards Astha felt strange, making love to a woman took getting used to."*<sup>32</sup>

Astha devotes more and more time with Pipee. She shares her mental state and emotions with her. She feels that her position in her husband's house is only of a housewife. She thinks that in-laws house expects certain prerequisites from a daughter-in-law.

*"She was a wife too, but not much of her was required there. "*<sup>33</sup>

Astha does not think that marriage is exclusively meant for sex or animal copulation. No doubt sex is there, however, marriage is more than that. For Astha, marriage is what offers interest, togetherness and respect. It is seen in Astha's reply to Hemant when he claims that he is her husband:

*"You think marriage is just sex."*

*'Of course I don't. What do you want that I don't give you?'*

*'Interest. Togetherness. Respect.'*<sup>34</sup>

Finally, the female protagonist, Astha wants Pipee as a support to her newly sought autonomy whereas Pipeelika wants her to invent herself. It is a strange association for Astha however for Pipeelika it is a short-term or temporary agreement. Astha is being used by Pip to overcome the emptiness in her life that is there because of the death of her husband, Aijaz. The result of the relationship between Astha and Pip is that Astha is on the edge of losing her marital bond with Hemant and her conventional family life. She becomes confused because she is neither courageous nor so physically powerful enough to live with Pipee permanently and leave Hemant. No doubt, her effort to satisfy her emotive need is clear insolence though it is short lived. In fact, she really upsurges against the domination as well as neglect of her husband, Hemant. Astha comes back to her husband not because she is scared of conventional ethics but only because she understands that Hemant cares for her.

### **5.3.2 Astha's Quest for Self-identity**

The novel presents a susceptible depiction of Astha's quest for individuality. It lends a voice to her aggravation, dissatisfaction, estrangement in a patriarchal world. Astha, the married woman questions the conventional values to search her identity. It is a novel which aggravates our thoughts as to how Astha, a wedded woman in search

of her 'self', records her disapproval against current masculine set up and arises as a self-governing woman. At the very outset, Astha's identity is established as a girl. Astha is brought up in an orthodox and a protective atmosphere. She ends up in the stormiest times in search of her 'self'.

*"Astha was brought up properly, as befits a woman, with large supplements of fear. She was her parents' only child. "*<sup>35</sup>

Her parental family is an orthodox middle class family. Therefore, her parents are very conscious of her needs and role in a middle class family. It is her mother who is very protective of her and expects her to conform to traditions. Astha's mother frequently used to tell her the real meaning and value of a woman is in her marrying happily and having progenies and attending husband as a God. She tells Astha:

*"When you are married, our responsibilities will be over. "*<sup>36</sup>

Astha's father and mother think differently. Her mother thinks that her daughter instead of taking education should get married and get settled. However, her father feels that his daughter should have a fruitful vocation. He wants her to be independent. Her father remarks:

*"If she did well in her exams, she could perhaps sit for IAS, and find a good husband there. "*<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, her father believes that her individuality will flourish. Her personality will sparkle like spotless stars. However, the female protagonist, Astha like a regular teen-age school going young girl remains absorbed in her idealistic dreams. She regularly visualizes of a loving and good-looking young boy making love to her. The ambience in which she is brought up is explained as *"She was well trained on a diet of mushy novels and thoughts of marriage"*<sup>38</sup>. Such nourishment gives her the annexes to search for a suitable buddy. Her boy friend, Bunty is the first boy who is the object of her mash. She is so engrossed about Bunty's thoughts that she begins to think nothing else than him. When Bunty is not with her she is very upset and restless. Astha remains absorbed in his thoughts and begins to perceive her future in him. Astha's affair with Bunty ends in tragedy and leaves a depressed longing in her heart.

Then, in the final year of her college, she again falls in love and is intensely engrossed with Rohan. He is a senior student of university. She tries to establish her identity through this relationship. They also enjoy each other's company.

*“He kissed the fingers, nails, palms; he felt the small hair on the back with his closed lips. Astha felt something flow inside her as she started at his bent head. She had never been so aware of her body's separate life before.”<sup>39</sup>*

The female protagonist, Astha is chained by her middle class values where she wants to uplift herself to upper class and always be afraid of failing down to lower class. Her proclamation of individuality was typically portrayed through her choice of partners. In teenage years itself, she has tasted the sense of autonomy by developing her relationship with Rohan. She shows her disrespect for societal conventions by having physical relationship with Rohan. This is sign of her disrespect for societal traditions. To assert her identity, she refuses to meet her prospective bridegrooms whom her mother has selected. She told her mother that she was not coming and could not meet anyone like that. Because of her middle class position, the relationships fail first with Bunty and then with Rohan. As a result, she admits her destiny and opts for conventional way of wedding with Hemant. After marriage, she becomes an archetypal Indian housewife. She performs every duty and responsibility of a housewife without any complaint. She does cooking, washing and arranging. However, very soon she begins to experience the dreariness, emptiness and monotony in her marital life. She gets fed up with waiting for Hemant. She is bored with routine work of looking after children and in-laws. The following line is very eloquent about this. It expresses her helplessness.

*“What was she to do while waiting for Hemant to come Home?”<sup>40</sup>*

Hemant who at first seemed to be a guy with open outlook, western thoughts and ideologies, turns out to be a loyal member of chauvinistic Indian male lobby. Thus Astha's desire of fulfillment recedes. She feels cold, dreary and distanced from him. Throughout the day, she has to wait for Hemant and think about him and to long for Hemant's company. However, it was never replied positively. Astha's expectation and pleasure was being destroyed again and again and Hemant was responsible for this.

*“Her subservient position struck her. She had no business kneeling, taking of his shoe, pulling off his shocks, feeling ecstatic about the smell of his feet.”<sup>41</sup>*

Astha rejects the grinding mill of patriarchy and tries to forge a new identity. After much resistance from her husband and in-laws she starts teaching in St. Anthony’s School and now she plays twin roles as a house maker and a working woman. When after her father’s death, Hemant gave all books to a library without asking her, she disputes with him. She also snuffles at her mother. She registers her protest for not consulting her before taking any important decision. She desires to be companion in sharing all the activities.

In fact, Astha enters her marriage with certain apprehensions but gradually gets lost in marital bliss and physical pleasure. However, in the course of time, she begins to get tired and fed up with her wed life and becomes restless, *“dullness began to taint Astha’s new life.”<sup>42</sup>* The time comes and she begins to suffer from dissatisfaction. She starts to feel that there is no purpose in her life. Her life has become aimless. She has very little work in the house, therefore, she gets lot of leisurely time during which she does nothing but waits for her husband and imagines him with her. She thinks and thinks as what to do and finally arrives at a decision to join some school as a teacher. She thought that it will be a part time job and therefore she will get sufficient space to care for the familial duties. Her idea that *‘with good work comes autonomy’<sup>43</sup>* comes into reality. Meanwhile, she gives birth to two children Anuradha and Himanshu. Hemant is fully engaged in establishing an industrial unit therefore he doesn’t have time to give to his family members and particularly his wife Astha. Astha feels harassed by her duty as a teacher, her little kids and Hemant as well as regular domestic tasks. The thought of leaving career of a teacher enters into her mind.

Astha observes but does not like that her in-laws make a discrimination regarding her children on the basis of sex. She is astonished at the response of the family and neighbors at the birth of her children. The birth of Himanshu was more celebrated than the birth of Anuradha. They were more delighted at the birth of Himanshu. She does not like that. In her radical proclamation, Astha does not like irrational belief, sex- suppression and vanity and partiality that Indian families do in connection with kids. She cultivates impatience, tension as well as nervousness. She

then attempts to express her identity through her poems, however in that also she is not free as her poems are scrutinized by Hemant. He callously disrespects Astha's pouring of her feelings out in her poems. He refuses to recognize battle in Astha's mind which she tries to reflect through her verse. Even when Astha asks him, he replies in such a way that she is left completely depressed, disheartened and, therefore, she stops writing poems. She is left only with the option to stop writing verse and she opts for it. Her thoughts are that if she earns salary she will be free to spend and will not require asking Hemant for every rupee she requires to spend. Her thoughts run as:

*"Her salary meant she did not have to ask Hemant for every little rupee she spent."*<sup>44</sup>

However, Astha feels frustrated and disillusioned when she wants to buy an antique silver box for their Goa tour and Hemant refuses to purchase it. Their conversation in this respect is very explicit example of woman's dependence on man though she earns money.

*"I also earn. Can't I buy a box if I want, even if it is a little overpriced?"*

*'You earn!' snorted Hemant. 'What you earn, now that is really something, yes, that will pay for this holiday.'*<sup>45</sup>

As per the convention of a patriarchal society of India money matters are managed best by men and women need not to be consulted about anything. Astha understands this and says:

*"Money spending was decided by him, not by her."*<sup>46</sup>

But Astha's education gives her the wings to question such a system and to want to be treated as an equal by her husband. Astha pleads and begs Hemant to understand that she wishes to be independent. She wants parity. However, Hemant declines her request forcefully. It makes Astha aware of her position in the family. She thinks that there are some basics of a married woman. They are '*a willing body at night, a willing pairs of hands and feet in the day and an obedient mouth.*'<sup>47</sup> She also thinks that if these are the basics then marriage is a terrible decision. Astha doesn't



sacrifice her pursuit of identity here instead she finds her expression in painting. Her paintings gave her the escape to be herself and forms separate identity from her husband and family. This arena is opened to her by Aijaz, the leader of the group that dramatizes social issues who comes to take workshop in school during summer vacation. Astha's repeated search for a conformation exposes her deficiency of self-confidence and even replicates her childhood where she had to look for consent for everything from the head of family.

After the murder of Aijaz and death of his troupe members' while staging a play on Babri Masjid Ram Janmabhoomi controversy, she joins manch for the cause of communal violence. This is her first independent decision which marks the turn of her life. She emerges as a social activist and starts taking part in rallies and staging. Hemant and Astha's in-laws did not like Astha's above decision. So Hemant in an admonishing tone said:

*"Please. Keep to what you know best, the home, children, teaching. All this doesn't suits you."*<sup>48</sup>

Hemant does not like Astha's engrossment with manch. Therefore, he advises her to pay more attention to her kids and household duties. He also tells her that her participation in the activities of manch does not suit her. Her mother-in-law also dislikes it and tells her that woman is supposed to confine herself into the four walls of the house. She is not supposed to take part in the politics and the activities on the road. In spite of her clan's displeasure, she carries on with her engagements and she even participates actively in Ayodhya Yatra. It is because of the outrage of family members, Astha becomes more firm and strong-minded. She is tired of sacrifices. She feels that she has done many sacrifices in the name of family and therefore she does not wish to lose anything anymore further. She is also fed up with the typical Indian married woman values and principles.

*" She was fed up with the ideal of Indian womanhood, used to trap and jail."*<sup>49</sup>

As a result, Astha, the female protagonist, proclaims herself and does not give up to her hubby's desires. She proclaims herself through monetary independence. Monetary independence pushes her to self-confidence. She knows well the financial side of authority and power of money. She has now become well aware that Hemant

is able to exert his authority only because he has all the finances under his power. She is not as independent as Hemant in money matters. This is the truth of maximum Indian females. They are compelled to live and stand the injustices inflicted on them by their male companions. It is because they don't have any other source of existence. Therefore if they have to exist they have to bear the injustices. Along with the injustices of in-laws, Astha has to bear injustice of her mother. She believes Hemant more than Astha. Therefore, she offers money which she gets from selling land to Hemant and not to Astha. This act on the part of Astha's mother affirms the conventional opinion that female cannot be entrusted in financial matters.

At a point of time, Hemant asks Astha to leave her job under the pretext of ill health, but it seems quite possible that he was insecure of Astha's growing independence. It is not just for money that she wants to paint but for it gives her life. To her, it represents security, not perhaps of money, but of her own life, of a place where she could be herself. Though Astha is economically independent, she is not able to do things for her. The money for the tour to Goa is from Astha's earnings and savings but the decision to spend it on what and how is taken by Hemant. He takes a decision to spend and spends money on air tickets without consulting Astha.

Astha in spite of Hemant's disapproval goes to Ayodhya to plan her track as a social activist to combat against ancient domination and subdual. There she meets the participants, Pipeelika and visits various places and temples with her and begins to like her. Astha's association with Pipee gives a new dimension to her quest for identity. Pipee comes to Delhi and spends time with Astha. In spite of objections from her husband and children, Astha establishes a commanding relation with Pipee. She falls in love with Pipee though she is a woman. In a very few meetings a strong sexual relationship is established between them. Astha begins to spend more time with her. She likes her company.

*"Afterwards Astha felt, strange, making love to a woman took getting used to."*<sup>50</sup>

The conflict between her roles of wife, mother and that of a lover continues and she finds herself uncertain between her desire for freedom and duty towards her household. She realizes that any relationship, even that be between a woman and

another woman, in the course of time turn out to be demanding. Pipee wants Astha wholly devoted to her but at the same time she wants to float in both vessels. Astha finds a soul mate in Pipee;

*“Astha thought that if husband and wife are one person, then Pipee and she were even more so.”<sup>51</sup>*

Astha proclaims herself by requesting for an isolated space to paint; this very act of hers outlines her individuality. This demand of hers is seen as luxury and not a necessity. Having space of one's own is certainly the biggest proclamation in the altitudinal sense. Hemant even remarks the space that she owns would be the cause of jealousy for many women. That's not all through which Astha defines herself the ultimate identity marker comes in form of Pipeelika her choice of beloved. This was the most gregarious choice to assert one's identity she out does all the societal norms of heterosexuality by choosing a lesbian partner. She not only had emotionally satisfying relation but the ultimate physical fantasies were also realized. She was so satisfied with Pipeelika that sex with Hemant just became mundane activity. This was same Hemant she longed for, in the initial days of her conjugal life. With Pipeelika she was her complete self and it even made her realize many facets of her relationship with Hemant which reflected power than love. Astha's slow discovery of her differences with her husband, her change from tender and hopeful bride to battered wife and her meeting with Pipeelika makes her realize the other state of woman in their '*familiar distress*'.<sup>52</sup> This is the reason which leads her to a corrupt, rather unethical guiltiness of lesbian love vindicating her unfashionable decency.

### **5.3.3 Husband and Wife Relationship**

Astha was in her final year of college, when the offer of marriage came from Hemant, an American MBA, working as an assistant in a Bank, and more importantly coming from affluent family. Astha's first meeting with Hemant gives approval of her marriage but she was quite nervous during the meeting. She begins to think about her early life, particularly her relationship with Rohan. She is muddled whether to tell Hemant about her relationship with Rohan or not. The engagement was done immediately after the meeting between Astha and Hemant and marriage was held in the month June. It was performed in grand fashion.

After marriage, they went on for honeymoon in Kashmir. They saw many places and valley and enjoyed each and every moment. But even during their honeymoon stay in Kashmir Astha couldn't forget Rohan. Therefore, she scolds herself. As Hemant takes care of her all the time during honeymoon, Astha is satisfied with him. She forgets Bunty and Rohan. Now, Hemant is everything for her. She realizes the importance of him when he is away from her. Hemant's presence gives a real pleasure to her and she hopes to enjoy every moment in the arms of Hemant. She also realizes the importance of sex and she acknowledges the fact:

*"Astha had not imagined that sex could be such a master."*<sup>53</sup>

Even though Hemant is extremely contented with his own life in terms of materialistic fulfillment but Astha, being the partner in his life, convince him all the time. She tells that money is not everything and within limitations, one can live with happiness. Astha wants to become mother after two years of her marriage. It shows that she does not ignore the concept of womanhood like many women belonging to fashionable and aristocratic society. She enjoys each and every moment of her pregnancy:

*"Astha enjoyed every aspect of her pregnancy. As it advanced, she became more and more bucolic."*<sup>54</sup>

Hemant too does not ignore Astha during her pregnancy as most of the husbands ignore their wives during their period of pregnancy for several reasons. Hemant does not follow them. The love and affection of Hemant for Astha makes her comfortable during her pregnancy. Still the traditional fears were always present in her mind.

*"Astha had heard men were revolted by the way women looked when they were pregnant but not Hemant."*<sup>55</sup>

Up to now everything is in tune between Hemant and Astha, but as the days pass, the changes take place and the tension begins to creep in their relationship. Hemant's burden increases. He is bothered by many responsibilities at a time. He has to take care of his industry, his better half, his baby child, Astha's mother and his own parents at the same time. As a result, he spares very little time to spend with Astha. In

the beginning, Astha does not mind it. She wants to be close with him but Hemant seems to be unable to make balance between his wife's emotional satisfaction and his business. There seems to be communication gap between them that oppresses Astha's mind and resultantly minor quarrel begins. The following conversation between them underlines this fact:

*"Hemant, why is it that we never talk anymore?"*

*'We talk all the time.' .....*

*'Grow up, Az, one can't be courting forever.'*<sup>56</sup>

Astha outwardly seems to be quite happy for being a teacher and a mother of two kids, but there is always undercurrent of resentment against being treated as one of the inferior sex. Hemant, her husband, shares the burden of looking after his first born and is quite liberal in his views. However, the outer sheen wears off gradually and Hemant proves to be an autocratic husband. He becomes an all-Indian husband and father. He begins to behave as the product of Indian patriarchal culture.

*"Between Anuradha's birth and Himanshu's, Hemant changed from being an all-American father to being an all-Indian one."*<sup>57</sup>

Astha now realizes the meaning of marriage. It means sacrifice of everything. She becomes the mother of two children. Her family is complete but there is no domestic satisfaction in her life. She wants to live her life in her own way. She thinks that she is a woman and a woman is supposed to do a lot of sacrifices. However, being contemporary, she doesn't want to expense her visions, delights as well as autonomy for the sake and name of family. She is tired of the model of Indian womankind. She wants parity with her husband. She wants to have the right to complain as Hemant has. She feels the necessity of having freedom like Hemant to ask him as to where is he going. However, her husband, Hemant is so commanding that he leaves no space for Astha to demand parity and lead her own life. It makes her to wonder on his claim and imagine that:

*"If there would ever be a day when she could feel that same right to complain that Hemant did."*<sup>58</sup>

Astha, the female protagonist, again and again experiences her nowhere existence. Her voice of protest and rebellion ultimately results in broadening of silences between Astha and Hemant. The two gradually drift apart. Astha's profound quest for identity and for considering her an equal and worthy member of society increases day by day. She quarrels with Hemant and shouts at mother when she comes to know that the books of her father have been donated to a library without taking her into account. She expresses her anger as:

*“Why did you do that, they were mine as well, I loved them.”*<sup>59</sup>

She experiences the feeling of an outsider in the house and hence, she asks Hemant who she is. She also asks that is she a tenant. Astha feels devastated because she is not consulted before taking any major or minor decisions. Even when Astha's mother sells her plot and gives the money to Hemant to manage, Astha feels embarrassed and being treated as weak and inferior. It aggravates her. In fact, Astha does not want to take man's position, she simply wants to be partner in sharing all the happenings and activities. This further widens the ravine between husband and wife.

As a hubby, Hemant is betrothed in making love sometimes considerate but it is only when he has to make Astha ready for his drive. He does not like Astha's impulses and fantasies and also her being a painter. He even does not like her working as a teacher. His is a physical love for Astha and not spiritual love. He seems to be in love with Astha's body and not her soul and mind. He wishes to have sex and Astha is fed up of it. Therefore, she is compelled to respond.

*“Then what? Do I have to give it just because you are my husband? Unless i feel close to you I can't – I'm not a sex object, you have others for that.”*<sup>60</sup>

The relationship between Astha and Aijaz further worsens their relationship. She becomes attached towards Aijaz within fifteen days. She loved looking at him on the stage. She loved his everything, especially his high spirit approach towards life. His high spirit and free thinking have highly influenced Astha. His entry in Astha's life gives birth to repression and anguish in her life once again. Aijaz's murder shocks Astha whereas Hemant remains calm and quiet at the death of Aijaz. She realizes the deepest pain and agony inside her. At the same time, Hemant's senses of antipathy

increases commotion and havoc in her heart. She finds it difficult to live with Hemant. After that, she is nervous and cannot stand even with small issues.

Astha loses her interest in the company of Hemant as she finds him a little possessive. She starts finding interest in other things. She is very much concerned with her social undertakings more than her husband and family. Hemant does not like her involvement in social activities. Here we find the clash between Astha's growing sense of freedom and liberty and Hemant's possessiveness. She becomes the victim of self-possessed loneliness. As a result, she tries to engage herself in social activities.

On the other hand, Hemant does not like his wife's involvement in social works. He has allowed her to work as teacher in the school, to participate in the stage performance in school Theatre with Aijaz, trip to Ayodhya and trip to Haridwar to meet her mother. Therefore, he thinks he has given her sufficient freedom and requires no more and he also is not going to endure her more. Therefore, when she decides to go on Ekta Yatra, Hemant rather helplessly warns Astha about the consequences of Ekta Yatra. He tells her that as goondas are attached to these yatra's anything can happen. She can be raped during yatra and he doesn't want that Astha should put her life in dangerous situations. He advises her to remain in the house and not to leave their children carelessly. But Astha is not ready to compromise with her personal likings. She is adamant and thinks of her own prospects in life. She thinks too much about her own social responsibilities and therefore, she is ready to ignore her won responsibilities towards her husband, her children.

#### **5.3.4 Feminine Sensibility**

Astha is the only child of her parents and hence her parents have a lot of expectations from her. Therefore, she is brought up and nurtured in an usual atmosphere of a middle class family. Her father continuously warns her to do hard work in her studies. His purpose behind it is not to make her independent only. He is worried to find a good husband for her. He is not the only person who is worried about her marriage, but Astha's mother is also thinking on the same line. Her mother believes that if parents die before their daughter gets married they can't get peace. The parents nurture Astha in such a way that she can get a perfect match for herself. She is forced to do morning walk and Pranayam with her parents. Perhaps this sort of

motivation has affected the psychology of Astha very deeply. Perhaps it is because of her parents over cautiousness, Astha begins to think that getting love is the only aim of this life. She begins to imagine:

*“a shadowy young man holding her in his strong manly embrace.”*<sup>61</sup>

She is a prey to unclear longings to such an extent that she desires almost every boy she sees with a thought in her mind. It is also true that under her dreamy nature, she falls in love, first of all with Bunty and then with Rohan. Astha falls in love with Bunty in the very first meeting therefore it can be called love at first sight. Astha's affection in her teenage towards Bunty is quite natural, and she is not able to leave her memory for him. Manju Kapur describes Astha's mental state:

*“Day and night the thought of him kept her insides churning; she was unable to eat, sleep, or study.”*<sup>62</sup>

Astha is stunned by the sensation of love. She is unable to eat, sleep and study. This is true only in case of Astha and not in case of Bunty as he doesn't have this feeling. As a result, Astha has to take initiative. In general it is man who takes initiative in love affairs. It is he who follows, plans and woos. This is reversed in the case of Astha. It is she who takes all the initiation first. She invites Bunty for a movie. She writes him letters when he is in the Academy and starts flirting. But it does not last long as her mother interferes and her fancies end in tears.

After her breakage from Bunty, she finds a new love in the arms of Rohan whom she meets in the final year of her college. She has also a physical relationship with him. In Indian society it is not tolerated to have physical relationship with anyone before marriage. Therefore, Astha lies about her visits and doings to her mother. She goes with Rohan in his old Vauxhall, frequently in the evening. For that she pretends of evening walk. She enjoys her meeting with Rohan until mob catch them in the act. This affair also ends when Rohan moves to Oxford for his further studies.

Being a student of English literature and grown up in the modern society of Delhi, she is not a firm believer in culture and tradition. Even she is not interested in the person whom she doesn't know or whom she doesn't love. Finally she gets



married to Hemant. After marriage they go to Srinagar for their honeymoon. She is very happy as her husband takes her every care and does everything that he finds useful in making their honeymoon memorable. After honeymoon, they come back to Delhi and Astha sinks herself in the role of daughter-in-law. She proves herself an accountable, affectionate, considerate and dedicated daughter-in-law and wife. Both of them are satisfied with each other. She forgets Bunty and Rohan. Now, Hemant is everything for her. His presence gives a real pleasure for her. She hopes to enjoy every moment in his arms. She as a partner in Hemant's life tries to console him every time. After two years of her marriage, like other married woman, she also wants to become mother. She does not ignore the concept of womanhood like other women from fashionable and aristocratic society. She enjoys each and every moment of her pregnancy.

Then there is transformation in the relationship between Hemant and Astha. Because of too many responsibilities, Hemant begins to give very little time to Astha. In the beginning, Astha fails to understand this. Astha wants to be close with him but Hemant fails to maintain balance between his occupation and his wife's passionate fulfillment. One day, Astha falters and demands to have a better relationship between them and the quarrel begins.

*'There is nothing wrong with our relationship.'*

*'Are you saying there is something wrong with me?'*

*'You said it, not I.'*

*'But i am not happy, so how can you.....'*

*'You think too much, that is the trouble.'*<sup>63</sup>

Now Astha understands the meaning of marriage, for her, it means sacrifice of everything on the part of woman. As there is no inner satisfaction in her life, she wants to do something for herself. She joins a school as a teacher. It brings changes into her life slowly but steadily. Her personality began to explore. During her job as a teacher, she comes in touch with new phases and areas of life and she begins to take interest in external affairs. Her school organizes a workshop. In this workshop she

happens to meet Aijaz and is fascinated by the multifarious personality of Aijaz. Her inborn instinct of searching for love arises here. Though she was a mother of two children, she is attracted to Aijaz but this relationship does not flourish. She feels very shocked when Hemant shows her the news of Aijaz's murder. Being an artist, she realizes the deepest pain and agony inside her.

*“Astha could not read further for the tears in her eyes. She turned away her head to cry some more.”<sup>64</sup>*

Astha has a strong desire for sex and physical relationship from the very beginning, however, Hemant seems to be unaware of this fact. Hemant's sense of antipathy increases commotion and havoc in her heart. She finds it difficult in the company of Hemant. Even the trifle things make her restless and unbearable. She herself thinks that she could have done many things with money spent on Goa trip.

*“She thought hopelessly of all the things she could have done with that money, of the beautiful silver box she could have possessed and she could be admired forever.”<sup>65</sup>*

Astha wants to live her life in her own ways. However, she thinks that as she is a woman, she is made to do a lot of sacrifices. But she, being a contemporary woman, doesn't want to sacrifice her dreams, pleasures and freedom in the name of family. She is fed up with the ideal of Indian womanhood. She compares her situations and conditions to that of Hemant. When in order to deliver a speech on behalf of Manch Astha goes to Ayodhya, she meets Pipeelika Khan, a widow of Aijaz. She is attracted towards her. After they come back to Delhi, they begin to meet each other again and again. One day Pip suddenly asks her:

*“Have you ever been in a relationship with a woman?”<sup>66</sup>*

For Astha, it is something strange. From her childhood, she has imagined only about the mannish hug. She has never seen woman from this point of view. But as she lives in Pip's company and feels attracted towards her, she cannot resist her from having relationship with Pip and finally a lesbian relationship begins to develop between them. In the course of time, both of them try to find a perfect partner in each other. Though for Astha this relationship is strange and awkward, she shares every

secret of her life with Pip which she hesitated to share with her mother or her husband, Hemant. Gradually, their relationship becomes more and more demanding. On one hand, Pipee wants Astha wholly devoted to her and on the other hand, Astha does not want to break away from her family. Astha wants to navigate in both vessels. She also wants to leave everything for the sake of Pipee but she is well aware that a married woman's world in Indian culture is her family. Perhaps, at this juncture, Astha doesn't find herself strong and bold enough to leave her marriage and live with Pipee. Therefore, the relationship breaks up.

### **5.3.5 Revolt against Patriarchy and social Norms**

This novel represents the female protagonist, Astha's revolt against age old customs, traditions, one sided family values and the institution of marriage. She is the woman who asks a bit more of life than tradition will automatically give her. She wishes instead of security, comfort and respectability, her emotions and spiritual needs to be recognized. She challenges the male domination. According to Nayak, Manju Kapur through Astha presents,

*“a frontal challenge to patriarchal thought, social organizations and control mechanism.”<sup>67</sup>*

Astha's parents try their best to acquaint their daughter with Indian culture and tradition. Especially her mother takes every precaution to make sure that their daughter is on right track. However, despite her parents' effort to confine Astha to the boundary of tradition and culture, Astha has shown the sign much earlier, that she can't be caged. When her mother invites a man to visit their home, Astha refuses to meet that man. Moreover, she has physical relationship with Rohan whom she meets in the final year of her college. Indian culture does not accept the girl's physical relationship with boy before marriage. Astha defies it and crosses the boundaries and limitations of society.

Her mother asks her to read the shastras, the Gita, the Vedas and the Upanishads. But she is not interested in reading them. Her parents expect her to walk on the trodden path of tradition and culture. Therefore, whenever her parents find her going away from the trodden path of tradition and culture, they guide her. Sometimes, they force her to follow the trodden path. Astha, being a student of English literature

and grown up in the modern society of Delhi is not a firm believer in conventions and culture.

Astha is a typical middle class woman. She is not interested in the person to whom she doesn't know and to whom she doesn't love. But anyhow she obeys her parents and accepts an arranged marriage. Initially, she exults in passionate sexuality within the limits of marriage. Outwardly, she seems to be quite satisfied with her job as a teacher and as a mother of two children. However, when one peeps into her mind, becomes aware of the undercurrent of resentment against the treatment of the inferior sex. After the first baby is born Hemant helps her to look after the baby. He shares the burden of it and he is quite liberal in his views. But in the course of time, Hemant attitude changes. He does not treat Astha equally. Astha objects to it and pleads:

*"Surely equals could relate better than master and slave."*<sup>69</sup>

Astha's participation in the workshop begins her journey of breaking all the boundaries of conjugal life one by one. She meets Aijaz there in the workshop and her old instinct of searching for love arises here. Even though she is a mother of a son and a daughter, she is fascinated by the dynamic nature of Aijaz. The beginning of Astha's rebellion against conforming to norms starts when she starts taking interest in conceiving a play about the Babri Masjid and its troubles. She meets like-minded people and drifts off into the world of activism. She is enraged all the more when her family members express their anti-attitudes to her activism. She inadvertently falls in love with Pip. Initially their relationship has friendship as a base but as time passes it deepens something more. According to Sushila Singh, Manju Kapur,

*"Seems to suggest that a married woman's job is not to complete wifing, child bearing and housekeeping but to do something more."*<sup>70</sup>

Astha, the female protagonist of this novel, defies every fetter of her traditional family as well as the values of conventional India. In the beginning she indulges in love affairs which as per Indian tradition are considered illegitimate. Her first love affair is with Bunty, an army cadet at NDA, Kharakvasala. It is broken as Astha's mother interferes. Her second love affair is with Rohan. In this affair she crosses the boundaries and limitations of society by enjoying physical relationship with Rohan. However, this affair also ends as Rohan goes to Oxford for further

studies. It is clear that Astha's parents try to confine her within the boundary of Indian tradition and culture, but it was not possible for them. Her parents are anxious to see their only child, Astha gets securely married. However, Astha goes on refusing every suitor but when her relationship with Bunty and Rohan comes to an end, she accepts the proposal of Hemant and marries to him. Her mother strongly believes used to tell Astha unless she marries, they won't be able to find salvation (Moksha). Traditional Indian society limits woman's individual development and growth. She has to abide by many rules and restrictions as she is controlled by man throughout her life. She lives and struggles under the oppressive mechanism of a closed society.

Astha's involvement in lesbian relationship with Pipee is also against traditional Indian culture. She is concerned about what her husband, her in-laws and other people from society would say. The relationship comes to an end not because she feels concerned about her husband, children and family but because of Pipee's possessive nature.

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## Chapter VI

### Concluding Remarks

#### Introduction:

This chapter is a summary of the entire thesis. It highlights the main points of discussion in all the chapters. The chapter contains the major findings that the researcher arrived at after analyzing the selected novels of Jai Nimbkar, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur. The researcher arrived at certain conclusions on the basis of analysis, which are given in this chapter. The researcher has also explained the academic and literary significance of the thesis. Suggestions and recommendations related to the concerned topic are also given at the end for the further research.

Till 1960, the novelists portrayed their female protagonists as meek, docile, tradition bound and submissive women. But after that with the emergence of more women novelists the image of female protagonists underwent a sea change. Meek, passive, tradition bound and submissive image of woman transforms though slowly into confident and resolute woman who is struggling to search her individuality. Creative writing of the 1990s highlights a woman's growth and achievement. The eight novels taken for study were published after 1960: Jai Nimbkar's *Temporary Answers* (1974) and *A Joint Venture* (1988), Anita Desai's *Cry*, *The Peacock* (1963) and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980), *That Long Silence* (1988) and Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* (1998) and *A Married Woman* (2003). Therefore, one finds the female protagonists of these novels as modern, rebellious and struggling to establish their identity. A broad study of these novels shows that the central theme is the same and it is the struggle of the female protagonist to establish her identity in a patriarchal set up. But all these novelists handle this subject in different styles and in their own unique ways.

The present study, based on the selected novels of Jai Nimbkar, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur deals with the changing image of woman, incompatibility in husband and wife relationship, the struggle for self-identity, the feminine sensibility and the breaking of tradition and traditional values and the

resultant alienation and suffering in the middle class Indian family. All the female protagonists are learned, aspiring individuals but incarcerated inside the margins of a conformist society. They are caught between tradition and modernity.

All the novelists have dealt with the problems and predicaments of a middle class educated woman in the patriarchal society but the treatment is different. Jai Nimbkar's protagonists are simple, straight forward and are having respect for customs and conventions. They stick up to traditional values. Anita Desai's protagonists are neurotic, psychic, desperate and frenzied and want to break the shackles of tradition and succeed in their vocation. Shashi Deshpande's protagonists resort to freedom not only intellectual freedom but sexual freedom too. They also fight against tradition, traditional values and social norms and succeed. They are practical minded and pragmatic opposite to Anita Desai's protagonists. Shashi Deshpande's female protagonists struggle to find a balance. They try to seek some middle way solution to their problems. They are ready to correct their faults for an enhanced life and even go on accepting things beyond expectation. Manju Kapur's protagonists are ultra-modern, bold, outspoken and as a result they defy tradition in their own way. Her protagonist Virmati as name suggests is brave and courageous. She marries an already married man which is against the Indian custom. Astha goes step further and indulges in homosexuality or lesbian relationship. It in fact is a threat to marriage institution. Manju Kapur depicts the ultra-modern image of woman. She does not portray conventional woman who was tolerating and selfless. Her women are self-assured, violent and determined women. They successfully aware the society of their needs as well as they succeed in establishing their individuality.

The quest for self-identity is the common theme in all the novels under study. But in the cases of all the female protagonists, the quest for genuine self is triggered by catastrophe which leads them to the immediate past which is heavily dominated by marriage and marital relations. Jyoti after thirty years of married life feels cheated by husband and leaves her husband, Ram. She goes to Mahabaleshwar where she finds time to ponder over her married life. Vineeta becomes a widow and comes back to her mother's house. As a result, she has an ample time to reflect on her relationship with her husband, Nagendra and her married life. In Maya's case, Toto's death provides her a chance to ponder over her marriage which is marked by lack of understanding

and communication. In Sita's case, her fifth pregnancy forces her to evaluate her marital relationship. In Jaya's case, shifting to Dadar flat after the allegations of corruption on Mohan gives her some time to think about herself, Mohan and her children. Sarita, in order to get rid of her husband's sexual barbarity, escapes to her parental home where she reflects on her married life. Virmati during her unwed pregnancy broods and understands that Professor Harish is of no use to her but her tragedy is that being emotionally weak, she couldn't kick the professor out. Even after getting married to Harish, she gets the status as his second wife and she tries everything to achieve that status. When Pipeelika leaves Astha, she gets time to ponder over her relationship with her husband and also over her life and realizes that she should continue to live with her family. Therefore, it is clear that in the case of each female protagonist there is some disaster or catastrophe that comes to provide her some respite from the daily drudgery and make them ponder over her past.

The marriages of all female protagonists are the results of some sort of convenience. Therefore, there are marital incompatibilities between husband and wife and most of the couples find it difficult to continue to live with each other at this or that point. The female protagonists want to break away from their counterparts owing to lack of emotional bond between themselves and their husbands. As a result, they fail to achieve a closeness of mind between themselves and their husbands. Vineeta and Nagendra in *Temporary Answers* and Jyoti and Ram in *A Joint Venture* prove to be emotionally as well as socially incompatible couples. Jyoti marries Ram only because she is ordinary looking girl. She had already developed a negative thought in her mind that it will be difficult for her to get married. Vineeta marries Nagendra only because he proposes her and Nagendra proposes her only because she is a doctor. Maya marries Gautama because of her father's wish and she doesn't want to make her father unhappy. Gautama is about her double age. There is also marital discord between Sita and Raman. They too stare uncomprehendingly at each other. In Jaya and Mohan's relationship, there is silence and communication gap. Sarita and Manu though love marriage fail to understand each other. Virmati though falls in love with Professor Harish it is only out of her craving for love which she doesn't get from her parents. Finally she marries him but it is also only out of necessity. In the relationship of Astha and Hemant there is also alienation and communication gap.

In all the novels under study man woman relationship faces the conflict of incompatibility, marital discord/incoherence and self-sufficiency. Almost in all the novels, the female protagonists at some point in their married life felt that they are cheated or their husbands don't value them or they don't get what they deserve or expect. They feel that their husbands are not considerate and they are taken for granted by their husbands. Vineeta of *Temporary Answers* feels that she is cheated. She thinks that she has given herself in completely to Nagendra but she doesn't get much of him in return. Jyoti of *A Joint Venture* after thirty years of married life experiences that she has not led a life of her own but her husband's, Ram's life and hence, decides to leave him. The important thing is that both of them very cautiously try to establish their self-identity and at the same time; they take care about not to root out themselves from the old foundations. Anita Desai honestly contemplates over the fate and future of modern middle class woman in male-dominated society and her total destruction at the altar of marriage. Her protagonists rebel but do not challenge the vainness of marriage as an institution, however, they reveal their inner world through their relations with family members, society and other members. Both the marriages prove to be unions of incompatibility. Maya of *Cry, The Peacock* spoiled and pampered daughter of a wealthy Brahmin marries Gautama, an older man, insensitive, pragmatic and rational lawyer who fails to understand her sensitive and emotional nature. There is temperamental incompatibility between them. "*Where Shall We Go This Summer?*" portrays the aching void in the life of Sita by probing deeper into her life as a woman, a wife and a mother. Raman is businessman, practical, faded, stooped with the responsibilities of life and Sita is sensitive emotional and rather irrational woman. Virmati of *Difficult Daughters* thought that she would get true love from the professor and it would be long lasting but it never happened. Professor Harish proves to be selfish and he uses Virmati to fulfill his ends. Astha of *A Married Woman* after giving birth to her first child begins to sense being treated as one of the inferior sex. Hemant also proves to be a despotic husband.

In recent time, money, sex and glamour are playing the considerable role in the formation of husband-wife relationship and in general man-woman relationship. It is a reason that more instances of divorce, emotional breakdown and other such cases have been seen in the modern ages which were not visible fifty or sixty years back. The importance of family is gradually decreasing, but it cannot be said that the

importance of man-woman relationship is losing its vigor. The joint family is disappearing fast. In this context, the mutual devotion to each other, submission to each other and dedication to each other are necessary to maintain healthy relationship between husband and wife. Moreover the concept of marriage has also been altered; there is a great role of materialism and after the feminist movement even each and every married woman would like to be economically independent. This sense of economic independence has brought the question of identity and self-respect. Unless there is true unification of man and woman emotionally, spiritually and intellectually, there cannot be a proper man-woman relationship.

All the four novelists have tried to see man-woman relationship in new state of affairs. They have tried to analyze man-woman relationship or husband-wife relationship in the framework of woman's viewpoint. In Jai Nimbkar's novels there are incompatibilities in the relationships of husband and wife. Her protagonists express their dissatisfaction and unhappiness, but being tradition bound they don't cross the cultural boundaries. Anita Desai's protagonists go one step further. When they face incompatibility with their partners, they suffer from suffocation and as a result they maintain alienation and try to release themselves in their own ways. They either go mad or resort to their parental home. Shashi Deshpande's protagonists also face incompatibility with their counterparts and they rebel. Through rebellion they try to establish their individuality. It is remarkable that they are never against motherhood, the institution of marriage, family, society, men and religion. They are against the system, idealization and monopolization that work together against man-woman relationship by creating broad cleft between them. Manju Kapur's protagonists are torn between tradition and modernity. There is clash of personal and universal, head and heart, emotion and reason. Therefore, Virmati, in spite of having orthodox family background, shows too much courage and dares to go beyond the family traditions and prefer to love the professor though she knew that he is already married. She involves herself in what society calls it illicit love. Astha challenges the traditional set up of family and morality by indulging in lesbian relationship with Pipee.

The female protagonists from all the eight novels are depicted as individuals who are alert about their individuality and position in the family as well as in the

society. We can see all of them are the victims of traditional values and patriarchy. As women, all of them need men to fulfill themselves, but as individuals they require to be liberated and autonomous. Jai Nimbkar's protagonists bow down their heads in front of the age-old traditions, customs. They compromise with their situations and fit them to the role of ideal wives and ideal daughter-in-laws. In one sense they are tradition bound. After marriage, Vineeta of *Temporary Answers*, and Jyoti of *A Joint Venture* shade their 'selves' and try to fit themselves into the family of procreation. Anita Desai's female protagonists suffer from neurosis as they are in search of selfless love. They don't get it in their conjugal life. Therefore, Maya in frenzy kills her husband, Gautama and then commits suicide and Sita on her father's advice comes back to her family of procreation and re-establishes herself in the family of her husband. Shashi Deshpande's female protagonists Jaya and Sarita suffer from sex dilemma and also face the incompatibility between themselves and their husbands. Since their sexual hunger is repressed, they strive for expression through their extra-marital sexual relationship. Sarita of *The Dark Holds No Terror* had affair with her college mate Padmakar Rao when she was unmarried. She has also an extra-marital relationship with her boss Boozie. Jaya of *That Long Silence* has extra-marital relationship with Kamat, her neighbour. Manju Kapur's female protagonists are educated, aspiring individual caged within the confines of a patriarchal society. Their education leads them to independent thinking for which their family and society become intolerant of them. They struggle between traditional values of life and modern values of life. It is their individual struggle with family and society. They plunge into a dedicated effort to carve an identity for themselves as qualified women. Virmati of *Difficult Daughters* and Astha of *A Married Woman* go step further and defy the tradition and patriarchy. Virmati loves and marries Professor Harish who is already married and has a child. Astha while defying traditional values is engrossed in lesbian relationship with Pipeelika, a young widow.

All the protagonists are learned, career-oriented, contemporary, married women who are susceptible to the changing times and conditions. The present study is an attempt to highlight the problems and predicaments faced by women in patriarchal family set up. The researcher has analyzed meticulously the problems, suffering, the load of family honor; attempts made to hold the family from breakage and struggle to maintain independence of the female protagonists as presented by the novelists. The

novelists have tried to establish woman as an individual who breaks from patriarchal constraints and refines her identity in tune with the changed social scenario of the modern times.

It is found that there is depiction of the oppression of women with greater self-consciousness, a deeper sense of involvement and often with a sense of outrage. Pre-independence writers had deified women's suffering but the writers of the latter part of the post-independence period have unhesitatingly presented their suffering with much greater realism. Jai Nimbkar, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur have presented various modes of opposition to patriarchal norms. Themes of love and marriage, strain of motherhood, women's bonding has been successfully reinterpreted and redefined in the light of individual autonomy and uniqueness.

In the novels of Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai and Manju Kapur the researcher finds the constant reference to myths, folktales and folksongs, especially to the great epics of India – *The Mahabharata*, *The Bhagwadgita* and *The Ramayana*. The researcher feels that the recurring references to great epics, religious books, folklores and folktales is clear indication that these novelists though writing about woman's emancipation from the clutches of patriarchy do strongly believe in Indian tradition and traditional values. Shashi Deshpande does not use these myths and folktales only as a reference but also provides us with a different interpretation, a new insight and perception by shifting the focus from the male-centre to the female perspective. She dismantles and deconstructs the myths which have been constructed to the advantage of men. In *The Dark Holds No Terror* Saru's coming back to her home of orientation after a long time is related to the story of Lord Krishna and Sudama. The story of Dhruva with slight modification to the sibling rivalry over parental love and affection is brought in the same novel. In *That Long Silence* Jaya compares herself with Gandhari who had bandaged her eyes to become blind like her husband. In the similar manner Jaya follows her husband blindly, when he has to go in hiding owing to his business malpractice. In *That Long Silence*, there is reference to the story of foolish crow and wise sparrow. This story in a feminist text may be hinting at the message that a married woman needs to be brutal, precise and neglectful of what others expect of her. However, Shashi Deshpande's use of folktales in her novels is not always aimed at extolling female virtues in male constructed stories. Her

intention is not to reinterpret them or question them. In Anita Desai's novel *Cry, The Peacock* there is reference to *The Gita* when Gautama tries to teach Maya the difference of meaning between 'attachment' and 'detachment'. He advises her to be detached and not to be attached. Maya also reads *Gita* which suggests her to cast away involvement. In Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* there are references to the lines from *Bhagwadgita* on page no. 88, 95, 96 and on 270. Astha's mother always used to enchant and echo the lines from *The Gita* to her. Manju Kapur's female protagonists, Virmati and Astha are antagonistic to male-dominated society and they do not want to depend on their male counterparts for their sexual need, emotional satisfaction and mental support. They show their boldness, mental courage, rebellious nature, initiating rapture, and above all, think about their own happiness. They like to create different options and alternatives for them.

In all the novels mothers of the female protagonists are the epitomes of patriarchy and traditional values. They are the carriers of traditional values and customs. They are presented as if they are there to imbibe these values among their daughters. Most of them are concerned with their daughters' marriages and about their future. Some of them shower more affection on their sons and consider the daughters as burden on the family. In Jai Nimbkar's *Temporary Answers* Vineeta's mother, being decision maker and because of her familial responsibilities and multiple roles, became a strict and disciplined woman. She expected everyone to behave according to her own plan. Naturally, Vineeta thought her mother as the controller of the family. However, her mother was very careful about the future of her daughters. She was alert about their friends. She warned them about selecting their friends. She also kept watch on their daily schedule and activities. In *A Joint Venture*, Jyoti's mother is presented as a middle class woman of orthodox mentality. She is concerned about her daughter's marriage. Mothers of Sarita and Jaya in Shashi Deshpande's novels believe that it is their duty to prepare their daughters for their in-laws house. Because of gender discrimination of their mothers, both of them reject their mothers whom they perceive as agents of oppressive patriarchal practices. Therefore they have stormy relationships with their mothers.

Like typical Indian mother, all the mothers of female protagonists try to inculcate such values and behaviors in their daughters which will fit them in the



patriarchal system and in their in-laws house. It is the reality that each and every daughter in India is expected to be loyal in continuing the age-old traditions of morality by sacrificing their own freedom and liberty.

All the mothers exercise their special prerogative to train their daughters into cultural mores so that their daughters take up their assigned role of daughters, wives and mothers without interrogation and learn the music of self-sacrifice, nurturance and devotions. In India this is common phenomenon in every class and in every house. Every mother in India does the same thing. Virmati's mother also every now and then scolds her and tries to teach her the lessons of self-sacrifice, nurturance and devotion. Kasturi is an orthodox woman who feels that a woman's place is in the house – in the kitchen – that she must give birth to babies and bring them up. A woman should all the time be alert to the needs of her husband and the other male members of the family. As far as Anita Desai's protagonists are concerned Maya is motherless and Sita has a mother but she was never in tune with her mother. The result is that they are deprived of mother's love and are not well prepared to fit themselves in their in-laws house. Therefore when they face the reality, they fail to stand for it.

The treatment of feminine sensibility is the unique feature in all the novels of Jai Nimbkar, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur. In India where women have traditional and fixed role, which does not allow any room for individualism, identity and assertion, these novelists write of women who question the age old traditions and want to seek individual growth. They try to reassess the known in a new context and find a meaning in life. Most of them suggest that a balance between the traditional, pre-set role of women and the contemporary issues has to be struck. The female protagonists don't hold their life partners responsible for their suffering and problems altogether but they identify, recognize their own faults and consider themselves also partly responsible for their suffering lots. They review their past life and when they find their faults they are ready to compromise and rectify their faults.

Anita Desai's female protagonists try to discover and rediscover meaningfulness in life through the known, the established. Definitely, they are not normal but different from others. They don't find an appropriate channel of

communication and as a result become alienated. They think about their lives. In the end their thinking, contemplation and reflection bring them into new vistas of understanding, which they had formerly ignored or rejected. As a result, her female protagonists are generally neurotic females. They are hyper-sensitive, engaged with their dreams and imagination and estranged from their environments. They often differ in their opinion from others. They embark on a long voyage of contemplation and try to find the meaning of their very existence.

Shashi Deshpande's novels have typical endings. They end with an optimistic note and hope not for just survival but for living a meaningful life. Unlike, Anita Desai's neurotic, intuitive and desperate female protagonists for example Maya in *Cry, The Peacock*, Deshpande's protagonists strive to find a balance, a way of finding some solution to their problems and sufferings. In this sense, it would not be wrong to say that her novels are positive in attitude towards women's life and their problems. Shashi Deshpande's female protagonists are ready to rectify their faults for a better life and even go on accepting things beyond expectation. They had turned their back to their problems and silently endured with constant fear, but they at the very end of the novels are sure of themselves and ready to face anything in life.

### **Observations:**

The close critical study of the female protagonists shows that all the novelists have portrayed educated, career-oriented and contemporary married middle class women who confront with the domestic and societal odds for the assertion of their identity. It also highlights that the image of woman has undergone a continuous change during the last fifty years. With the changing image of woman there is change in the ways and modes of expression of their identities. They fight against social odds to find more freedom and struggle to attain equal status with their counterparts. Jai Nimbkar's protagonists are simple and straight forward, who are bound with Indian culture. They don't challenge the patriarchy openly or boldly. Their challenge to patriarchy is within yet they succeed in establishing their identities as well as self-respect. Therefore, in Jai Nimbkar's protagonists there is awareness for the assertion of their identity while Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande's female protagonists are not only conscious of self-assertion but also they strive to achieve it and for that they rebel against patriarchy. Whereas Manju Kapur's protagonists are bold, ultra-modern

and outspoken. They defy the tradition and traditional values and challenge patriarchy. They even challenge the institution of marriage to assert their identity.

In the Indian subcontinent women are well aware of and awakened for their rights, equality and assertion of identity; however they do not submit themselves to the radical feminism which is seen in European continent. All these women are knocking the doors of their own freedom in the male dominated world to achieve equal status and respect. All this leads to form a meaningful and harmonious society. The motives of expression of identity is seen in Jai Nimbkar's protagonists while bold assertion of identity in Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande's protagonists whereas an attempt to break out the system in Manju Kapur's protagonists. So there is an ascending graph in the assertion of self-identity in the female protagonists of these four novelists.

It is rather interesting that in case of quest for self, all the protagonists face some crisis in their married life and as a result they find some space and time to reflect on their past life. Their reflection reveals them the reality which enables them to recover, rediscover their real self and take the appropriate decisions and re-establish their identities. Another interesting observation is that Vineeta, Virmati and Sarita's marriages are as per their choice and Jyoti, Maya, Jaya and Astha's marriages are arranged marriages. However, all the marriages have taken place out of convenience or parental force. Still we find incompatibility or marital discord between husband and wife in all the novels. All the marriages are failures in this or that sense. All the protagonists suffer and feel suffocated under the burden of patriarchy irrespective of their arranged or love marriage. All of them have to struggle for equal status, autonomy and their place in the in-laws house or house of procreation. Each of them uses her own unique way to release herself from age-old traditions and clutches of the patriarchy. Vineeta is a widow so she confronts the problem of widow remarriage but till the end of novel she thinks and thinks whether to marry Abhijit or not and at the end of novel decides not to marry him. Jyoti who forsakes Ram, at the very outset of a novel, comes back when she comes to know that Ram and her business are in crisis. Her motherly feeling for Ram brings her back. Maya being obsessed with Albino prophecy goes mad and kills her husband Gautama and commits suicide. Sita, who has gone to her parental house, decides to compromise and

comes back to her house. Jaya who as a revolt maintains the silence throughout the novel finally succeeds in breaking it. Sarita like Sita compromises with the situation and continues to live with her husband, Manohar. Virmati after many ups and downs in her life succeeds in getting married to Professor Harish and also succeeds in attaining the status of his wife. Astha after indulging in lesbian relationship with Pipee for some time comes back to her husband, Hemant. She returns not because she is afraid of conventional ethics but she realizes that Hemant really loves her.

As far as the themes of the novels are concerned, all the novels deal with the common themes. They are man-woman relationship and marital disharmony, quest for self-identity, spirit to raise question against patriarchy, male dominance, gender discrimination, autocracy of male species of the society and struggle against age-old traditions and customs. All the novels depict the struggle of the female protagonists against social constraints and their attempt to establish their autonomy. In their struggle, some of them indulge in pre-marital love affairs or extra-marital relationships or lesbian relationship.

Though all the novelists depict their women fighting against patriarchy and for their emancipation it doesn't mean that the novelists don't believe in Indian tradition and traditional values. The fact is that they all strongly believe in them and recurring references to myths, epics of India like *The Gita*, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*, folktales and folksongs affirms it.

Finally, all these novelists have made a constructive contribution towards understanding the mind of the modern Indian woman. They have depicted the trauma of modern middle class women who have undergone varied roles in a changing society. On the one hand, woman is expected to be docile, sacrificing, a silent but resourceful home-maker. On the other, the harsh realities of life force her to find employment, go out of the house, be strong and face the world. She has to find a balance between her own aspirations and the demands of family members and society. She is no longer satisfied with being a wife and a mother. Her horizons have widened and are continuously expanding. Therefore, her tensions and burdens are also ever-increasing. All these pressures are revealed and dealt with in the novels under study. The understandable answer to these pressures, tensions and burdens lies in rebellion, however, there are some domestic calamities with the revolt. The female protagonists

in these novels anticipate the crises in their lives positively but in their unique ways. All of them are well aware that woman needs to retain her essential femininity in her fight for liberation and parity with her counterpart. The significant thing is that each novelist has provided her own solution to these irritating issues.

### **Academic Significance:**

The researchers can take the other novels by these novelists as well as other contemporary novelists and can study the female protagonists as well as other female characters from these novels in the light of this study. This study will also pave the path to understand the female characters in highly critical and analytical way and thereby it will open the new horizons to the researchers and society. The researcher has studied these female protagonists taking into account the five aspects of their personalities and their relationships. Therefore, the students of literature who wish to study the female protagonists of other novels as well as plays or short stories will find this research as useful. It will help them to study female protagonists in other works.

### **Suggestions for further research:**

The researcher has attempted investigation of female protagonists in the select novels of Jai Nimbkar, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur in the light of the image of woman, quest for identity, protagonist's relationship with their husbands, their feminine sensibility and their revolt against patriarchy and social norms.

1. Similar study can be carried out regarding novels and plays by other writers.
2. A study of the female protagonists of other novels by these novelists can also be done.
3. These female protagonists can be studied from psychological, sociological perspectives as well as the reasons for their revolt against patriarchy and social norms can be explored.
4. These female protagonists can be compared with the other female protagonists in the contemporary novels.
5. Minor characters in these novels or human relationships in these novels can also be studied.

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