

I. Introduction

Shashi Deshpande, born in Dharwad, India in 1938, writes about female issues in the Indian patriarchal social context. She is one of the most understated yet confident voices who explore individual and universal predicaments through the female characters. Her concern for women's quest for self is reflected in her novels which are deeply rooted in the line of social-moral-sexual fiction. Her novels project the characters who are concerned with their 'selves' and they learn to be 'honest' to themselves. Her protagonists are from the middle class educated women who are financially independent and represent a larger part of the contemporary Indian society. Her heroines, sometime, are attracted to the comforts of traditional society because they find themselves in the situation of uncertainties and doubts whenever they reject the rituals that are the vestiges of past. This situation of both attraction and rejection of society creates a situation of ambivalence in part of the protagonists. But they never compromise ignoring their feminine consciousness to the male dominated society. Rather they seek to justify themselves and become ready to face whatever comes ahead.

Trapped between tradition and modernity, her sensitive heroines are fully conscious of being victims of gross gender discrimination prevalent in a conservative male-dominated society. So, they are always in conflict between the idea women have of themselves and the idea that society imposes on them of what being a woman is. With the presentation of such female characters Deshpande has re-incarnated the new Indian woman in traditional Indian society and has, thus, reinforced the female dilemma in her novels. Hence, her regard for the social problems especially of the middle class woman is evident.

Most of the protagonists of Deshpande are females and the world, which they occupy, is domestic. Her fiction depicts women in their traditional roles: woman as granddaughter, as grandmother, as daughter, as wife, as mother. 'The existential struggle'

of the women who refuse to float along with current form is the core of Deshpande's novels. Her characters refuse to surrender their individual selves. Their inability to compromise and surrender inevitably result in isolation and loneliness. In their existential struggle they suffer intensely and seek to search their selfhood. Her novels are peopled by women who are in perceptual quest for meaning and value of life. Since her novels are woman centered, the "feminine consciousness" becomes the central issue of her novels.

Shashi Deshpande's first book, *The Legacy*, a collection of short stories, is the authentic recreation of India. There is nothing sensational or exotic about her India: any Maharajahs or snake charmers. She does not write about the grinding poverty of the Indian masses; she describes another kind of deprivation- emotional. The woman deprived of love, understanding, and companionship is the center of her work. She shows how traditional Indian society is biased against women, but she recognizes that it is very often women who oppress their sisters, though their values are the result of centuries of indoctrination.

One of her well known novels, *Roots and Shadows*, which is also the winner of Nanjangud Thirumalamba Award, describes the break up of a joint family, held together by the money and authority of an old aunt, a childless widow. When she dies, she leaves her money to the heroine, Indu, a rebel. Indu left home as a teenager to study in the big city, and is now a journalist; she has married the man of her choice. But she realizes that her freedom is illusory; she has exchanged the orthodoxy of the village home for the conventions of the "smart young set" of the city where material well-being has to be assured by sacrificing principles, if necessary. Indu returns to the house when her great aunt dies after more than 12 years' absence. As she attempts to take charge of her legacy, she comes to realize the strength and the resilience of the village women she had previously dismissed as weak.

In her next novel *That Long Silence* for which she was awarded Sahitya Academy Award, Deshpande has portrayed the dilemma of a woman writer, who is also a house wife. Being a writer she is expected to present her views and ideas before the society but she still remains silent probing into her past, struggling with her present and trying to establish a rapport with her future. *That Long Silence* is a heroine-dominated novel and shows a woman facing the problems so frequently discussed by sociologists. The quest for identity is a theme in this novel. Shashi Deshpande's achievement lies in the depiction of her central character, the introspective and inward probing Jaya. She is representative of girls brought up in middle class families in post-Independent India, a time when most parents strove hard to provide their children with English education and exposure to western modes of living and thinking. Ultimately, Jaya seeks to break the age-old silence in order to explore the inner world of Indian woman's sensibility.

Another novel, *If I Die Today*, contains elements of detective fiction in which one of the memorable characters is Mriga, a 14 years old girl. Her father, Dr. Kulkarni, appears modern and westernized. Yet he is seized by the Hindu desire for a son and heir, and never forgives Mriga for not being a son; her mother, too, is a sad, suppressed creature, too weak to give Mriga the support and love a child needs to grow up into a well balanced adult.

The Dark Hold No Terrors, Deshpande's first published novel and also the winner of Nanjangud Thirumalamba Award, seems to be grown out of one of her short stories "A liberated woman." The story is about a young woman who falls in love with a man of a different caste, and marries him in spite of parental opposition. She is intelligent and hardworking, and becomes a successful doctor, but her marriage breaks up because of her success. In the novel, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita, too, falls in love with Manohar, lower in caste than her, and also marries him without her parents' consent. She resents the treatment of her mother that is lopsided and based on gender difference. That's why she

defies her mother to become a doctor, and defies caste restrictions by marrying the man she loves. Her husband Manohar is a failure and resents the fact that his wife is the primary breadwinner. Sarita uses Boozie to advance her career, and this further worsens her relationship with Manohar. Manohar can not endure her growing reputation among the people, who hardly recognize him. Therefore, he turns out to be a sadist at night. Sarita cannot accept the pain and the way he treats her. So, she leaves him and returns to her parents' house.

Her stay in her parents' house, she observes suspiciously for she had already rejected them in search of female equality. Her sense of rebellion too, can not make her endure a life of alienation and isolation in her father's house for she also wants to be incorporated within social system with new vigor. So she decides to meet her husband again with a determination to face whatever comes ahead.

Thus, we can say that Shashi Deshpande's novels are concerned with a woman's efforts for discovering self; an exploration into the female psyche and an understanding of the mysteries of life and the protagonist's place in it. The movement of Deshpande's heroines from their parental home to the outside world, through education and marriage, do not really initiate them into knowledge of the self. Their defiance of the mother does not ensure them the freedom they desire. Their return to the home in the absence of motherly figure only helps them realize their own selves. They had imagined that their mothers stifled their growth and so defied their growth and so defied them. But when husbands began to kill the very roots of their existence, they defied their husbands and found a way of their own, rejecting all over-riding influences. Their fear of losing themselves in the dark mysterious universe is dispelled by their understanding that the "dark holds no terrors," if one can believe in one's self and if one accepts the responsibility for one's life.

Deshpande's first published novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980) has received much critical appraisals since its publication. The novel projects a financially independent and educated woman in the traditional Hindu society and draws on the events that she undertakes, to which critics have interpreted in different ways. The scholars and critics have given many opinions from different thematic perspectives. Some of them have presented their views on the relationship between husband and wife while others have focused on the social system and protagonist's realization of her place into it.

Premila Paul, in her essay "*The Dark Holds No Terrors: A Woman's Search for Refuge*", says, "*The Dark Holds No Terrors* is certainly a protest novel especially in the Indian context in the sense that it reacts against the traditional concept that everything in a girl's life [...] [is] shaped to that single purpose of pleasing a male" (71). Paul, giving humanistic touch to the novel, further says: "The novel does not limit itself to the narrow confines of feminist problems. With a woman as the central figure, Shashi Deshpande probes the universally relevant issues of human relationships, man's tragic aloneness etc." (72). Here, Paul presents *The Dark Holds No Terror* as a protest novel which transcends feminist constraints, and raises the vast issues like man's aloneness and other problems which are essentially human problems. Concentrating upon the psychological problems of a career woman the essay hardly presents any trace of sentimentalizing woman's issues.

Another critic Sarabjit Sandhu, reading the novel from gender perspective, says: "The novel reveals the life of [protagonist] who is always neglected and ignored in favor of her brother" (82). Stating that financial independence is not enough for women to be free, she further expresses, "This is precisely what happens to Saru when with her economic independence, reinforced with the fact that she earns more than Manu, she still feels stripped of her independence by virtue of being assigned to the job of a house wife, i.e., bringing up children and subserving the interest of her husband" (85). In her essay, Sandhu is basically concerned with the problems of a career woman who has to take care

of their family, too. The essay reflects how the sense of double duty, as a career woman and also as a responsible housewife, always haunts them and problematizes their life. This burden of double duties works as a force that imbalances the marital life of protagonist.

For Prasanna Sree Sathupati, the novel “deals with the problems of the adjustments and conflicts in the minds of protagonist who ultimately submits to the traditional rules, in the transitional society” (15). Sathupati, dealing primarily with ‘conflict and identity’ that recurs in Sarita time and again, says, “The struggle of these women to give shape and content to their individual existence in a sexist society culminates in a crisis and ends in compromise” (18). Here, Sathupati takes the ‘open ending’ of the story as the protagonist’s unconscious submission to the traditional society.

S. P. Swain, reading the novel from psycho-feminism perspective, takes it as a novel throughout which “Deshpande probes the inner recesses of [protagonist’s] psyche in order to discover the root of her silent suffering and passive resistance” (37). “The conflict in her protagonists”, as Swain expresses, “is resolved through their desperate unconscious submission to traditional roles” (34). In this essay, S.P. Swain, by presenting Sarita’s struggle with her family, husband and society, which is later interspersed with her decision to come to term with her husband, deals with the feminine self that is a fusion of the polarities of being acceptance and rejection, flexibility and rigidity, fantasy and reality, and rebellion and reconciliation. Swain takes Saru’s conflict as every woman’s conflict between the desired and the imposed, willed and the unwilled.

Another critic Indira Bhatt has attempted to examine “how Shashi Deshpande portrays in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, the protagonist Sarita and her frustrations, her awareness of the problems, her recognition of the crisis in her life and her efforts at resolution” (41). Bhatt, focusing on protagonist’s guilt consciousness, says, “Though Saru considers Manu at fault for shattering the eternal dream of a woman to find happiness in

marriage and though she wants to be free from her terrifying loveless trap, she feels guilty of breaking their marriage. This guilt she feels, always and always in her life. (46)

Here, Indira Bhatt has concentrated on the guilt consciousness in the mind of protagonist because of which she comes to compromise with the society. This guilt makes Sarita to reassess her relationship with her mother, father, husband and society in general.

P. Ramamoorthi in *Indian Women Novelists* says, “Shashi Deshpande’s novels are concerned with a woman’s quest for self; an exploration into the female psyche and an understanding of the mysteries of life and the protagonists’ place in it” (38). Here, the essayist has dealt with the influence of feminism on Shashi Deshpande’s heroines. Issue of feminism is the core of this essay.

Likewise J. Bhavani, looking through psychoanalytical perspective, says, “As Saru undergoes the ‘middle life crisis’ she gains maturity and wisdom, realizing that her mother was also a victim of patriarchy, and her father, far from being a weakling could hold his own” (26).

Another critic R. Mala In *Indian Women Novelists* says:

Deshpande’s protagonists have generally followed the course and concern of her own life: of young women, career-oriented, getting married, having children and then wondering “What Next”. Her first person narrators are for the most part intelligent, educated, and familiar with literature, psychology and contemporary life. The vitality of her characterization stems from her own sense of perception and her experience of life. (51)

In this essay, Mala has focused on the protagonists of Deshpande who are educated, married and having children within the search for their own roots and identity.

Thus, on the one hand, some critics have written about the social construction and its problems in Post-independent India and suppression where women faced difficulties and problems. On the other hand, some critics have given more emphasis on Deshpande’s

effort to a major aspect of the feminist project, which is to transform a predominantly androcentric symbolic order.

The novel tells the harrowing tale of Sarita, often referred as Saru. Deprived of parental care and affection, she lives a pale, loveless life. Her mother loves her brother but hates her. And when he is drowned, she blames her for no fault of her own: “You killed him. Why didn’t you die? Why are you alive, when he’s dead?”(173). This is the plight of not only Saru but millions who are born girls. The fault lies with their gender, not with them. Saru receives education in spite of her mother. Her education makes her see the difference in the treatment of a son and a daughter by the same parents. It makes her see the scorn to which a girl is subject since she has very little to do with the propagation of the family lineage. The male child is considered superior for he will light the funeral pyre and perform all rites including ‘Sharadha’ to placate the soul of the dead. When Saru expresses her wish to stay with her mother all life, her mother says: “you can’t” (40). But her brother Dhruva can stay: He is different, he is a boy” (40). This gender difference in her mother’s treatment of her son and daughter enrages Saru. She rebels against her. So, she looks forward to the role of a wife with the hope that it will give her relief from the oppression of the mother, it will give her freedom.

But this decision proves to be an anti-climax. Her second home becomes the very prison she had escaped. She is soon disappointed with her husband. Her husband is a sadist who bullies her while she provides bread and butter to the family. He feeds on her earning and tortures her both physically and sexually. Saru is too busy in her profession to look her children. The working wife stands isolated from familial ties and obligations. She is torn between her obligation to her profession as a doctor and her duties to her family as a housewife. Her family life is disturbed. Manu cannot bear people greeting her and ignoring him. Manu’s male ego is hurt by her superiority complex. His masculinity asserts

itself through sexual assaults upon Saru. Thus, benevolent, cheerful husband by day turns a lecherous, libidinous rapist at night. This causes Saru to become a mute sufferer.

When her mother dies, Saru leaves for her parent's home because of Manu's continuous attack upon her. But she is there an unwelcome stranger and an unwarranted guest. She is alien to her parents. Her father shows no pity, no sympathy. For hers was not an arranged marriage.

Throughout the novel, Deshpande probes the inner recesses of Saru's psyche in order to discover the root of her silent suffering and passive resistance. She receives a letter from Manu. Manu is arriving soon. But why? Why should he come? She begs her father not to open the door. Tired of knocking, Manu would leave. That is exactly what she wants. She wants to "put herself in another's hands" (55). But she starts to brood over her life of escape. She realizes that parental home is no refuge. Neither her father nor her mother can provide her shelter. She is her own refuge. Here, she realizes her feminine self and says, "And oh yes, Baba, if Manu comes, tell him to wait. I'll be back as soon as I can" (202). This is the expression of the assertion of her individuality, her willingness to confront reality and not to run away from it.

Deshpande, thus, lends her effort to a major aspect of the feminist project, which is to transform a predominantly androcentric symbolic order. Saru's journey is a journey from self-alienation to self identification, from negation to assertion, from diffidence to confidence. She learns to trust her feminine self. All dualities vanish and she attempts to attain self fulfillment and the 'wholeness of being'.

II. Feminism and Female Awakening

Feminism: An Overview

Feminism as a movement got its impetus within the social history of modern women. The women recognized unequal status and banded together in collective action to rectify the wrong done to them. They dared to come out of behind closed door to tell of their plight and their vision without sexual bias. Men had long denied women their right to personhood. They achieved that by not allowing women to own property, or enter into contracts, education and citizenship.

Feminism came into existence with questioning their place in patriarchal society. Different types of restrictions on the fundamental rights of women have existed throughout history and in all civilization. If we view the history chronologically, women were taken as inferior to men by different thinkers as Valerie Bryson citing William Thompson says, “Whatever system of labor ... whatever system of government... under every vicissitude of *MAN*'s condition he has always retained woman his slave” (33). Aristotle declared that the female is female by virtue of certain lack of qualities and Thomas Aquinas believed that woman is ‘imperfect man’. Feminism, in this context, is denial of control men had on women through which men had always been able to subjugate women into their concerns.

Originally a political attack upon other modes of criticism, feminism is diverse in its inclusion of various ideas. But in its diversity it is concerned with the marginalization of women. Though feminism conjures up various images and ideas regarding the women's issues, it is often represented as a single entity and somehow concerned with gender equality and freedom. A good understanding of the definition of the term ‘feminism’ then becomes crucial to give a clear cut concept and its basic premises. Feminism is a doctrine that holds a belief in sex equality and opposes the sex hierarchy. It presupposes that

women's condition is socially constructed rather than simply predestined by God or nature. Feminism is a belief or advocacy of the influence of women in spheres conventionally reserved to man, or more briefly, the movement for the equality of the sexes. Feminism, in this sense, is the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men and the struggle to achieve this aim.

Feminism is also a social movement that seeks equal rights for women, giving them equal status with man and freedom to decide their own careers and life patterns as Hans Berten writes, "Feminism seeks to change the power relations between men and women that prevail under [...] patriarchy, a term that referred to the complete domination of men in Western society" (96). Giving political touch to this movement he further says, "Feminism and feminist criticism are profoundly political in claiming that the personal and the political can not be separated. They are also political in the more traditional sense of trying to intervene in the social order with a program that aims to change actually existing social conditions" (95).

Feminist movement, in this situation, seeks to change society's prevailing stereotypes of women as relatively weak, passive, and dependent individuals who are less rational and more emotional than men. It seeks to achieve greater freedom for women to work and to remain economically and psychologically independent of men if they choose. Seen in this context, feminists criticize society's prevailing emphasis on women as objects of sexual desire and sought to broaden both women's self-awareness and their opportunities to the point of equality with men.

From its tradition to now, feminist theories have undergone different changes. The intention of these movements has always been to find the explanation for women's oppression which can express women's commonality and thus bind all women together. The earlier feminism sees it as the struggle against all forms of patriarchal and sexist oppression. Such an oppositional definition posits feminism as the necessary resistance to

patriarchal power. It is committed to the struggle for equality of women, an effort to make women become like men because M.H Abrahams writes:

Western civilization is pervasively patriarchal- that is male-centered and controlled, and is organized and conducted in such a way as to subordinate women to men in all cultural domains: familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal, and artistic [...]. What is masculine and what is feminine are merely the cultural constructs generated by the omnipresent patriarchal biases of our civilization. (89)

It follows that now-a-days feminism must be viewed as a rapidly developing major critical ideology or system of ideas in its own right. Its developmental stages have historically been dependent on and in tension with male centered political and intellectual discourse, as Valerie Bryson says, “By stressing the specificity and partiality of all experience postmodernism can guard against generalizing about all women on the basis of white middle-class western experience. It can challenge the legitimacy of male perspectives and reveal the falsity of their claims for objectivity and universality [...]” (229).

Thus, it is clear that feminism calls for changes in the social, economic, political, or cultural order to reduce and eventually overcome this discrimination against women. The bottom line of all this subordination is the lack of freedom. Of course, several theorists, writers and scholars have underlined this issue from various perspectives. Institution of marriage, at its present form, has become one of the bondages that restrict women from realizing her independent self. It has been defined by men as a legal authority over women. Feminism addresses this issue to instill a sense of human existence which is devoid of sexual biasness.

Notwithstanding the contributions of revolutionary nineteenth and early twentieth century authors such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Charlotte Perkins Gillman, and Virginia Woolf, feminist literary criticism developed mostly since the beginning of the late

twentieth century women's movement. That movement included the writings of Simon de Beauvoir, Kate Millet, Betty Friedan and other 'second-wave' feminists, who examined a female "self" constructed in literature by male authors to embody various male fears and anxieties. They saw literary texts as models of power. In her book *The Second Sex* (1949), de Beauvoir asked what is woman, and how is she constructed differently by men. In the book she raised feminist consciousness by appealing to the idea that liberation for women was liberation for men too.

Another major work was Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) in which Friedan attacked deadening domesticity- the conditioning of women to accept passive roles and depend on male dominance. Her tendency was to overturn laws and practices that enforced the inferior status of women by discrimination along with a call for enforcement of equal rights and end to sex discrimination is clearly reflected in the book.

Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1977) signifies a significant stage in political feminist writing on literature. Her focus is upon the twin poles of gender as biology and culture. In her analyses of different male writer such as Henry Miller, D.H Lawrence, and Jean Genet, Millet finds a relationship between sex and power in which the distribution of power over the male and female partners mirrors the distribution of power over males and females in society. Patriarchy, for Millet, is the main cause of women's oppression because "it subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male" (Selden 137).

Other critics such as Elaine Showalter, Anette Koldony, Sandra Gilbert, and Susan Gubar questioned cultural, sexual, intellectual, and psychological stereotypes about women and their literatures using both essentialist and constructivist models. The focus upon the silencing and oppressing of women gave way to deeper interrogations of what a history of women's oppression meant. As this field of feminism diversified, a good deal of

philosophical and political depth was attained as those interrogations became more complex.

Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1986) presents three phases of modern women's literary development. The first, the 'feminine' phase (1840-80), shows how "women writers imitated and internalized the dominant male aesthetic standards, which required that women writers remain gentlewomen" (Selden 141). The writers of 'feminist phase' (1880-1920), according to Raman Selden, "advocated separatist Amazonian utopias and suffragette sisterhoods" (141). These writers protested against male values. The third 'female phase' (1920 onwards) adopted characteristics of the former phases and developed the idea of specifically female writing and female experience in a phase of self-discovery. Within the 'female' phase, Showalter describes four current models of difference taken up by many feminists around the world: biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic, and cultural.

Showalter's biological model is the most problematic: if the text can be said in some way to mirror the body, then that reduces women writers merely to bodies. There is possibility to reach to the situation from where these feminist writers wanted to escape if they make biological difference their basis of writing. Writing biologically means inscribing body into writing and taking body as the corporeal ground of intelligence. Yet, Showalter praises the frank articulation of sexuality through writing which related the intimacies of the female experience of the female body.

Showalter's linguistic model asserts the construction of the new female language in order to resist the hegemony of male language because women are speaking men's language as a foreign tongue. In this situation, whatever voices are raised is in vain because interpretation, perception, understanding and conceptualizing is through male language. Therefore, some of the feminist writers searched for female language in 1960s

so that they could easily express their desires, feelings and emotions. But that was not ultimate solution for Showalter. Reflecting on it Raman Selden says:

If we accept Foucault's argument that what is 'true' depends on who controls discourse, then it is reasonable to believe that men's domination of discourses has trapped women inside a male 'truth'. From this point of view it makes sense for women writers to contest men's control of language rather than merely to retreat into a ghetto of feminine discourse.
(136)

Therefore, Showalter offers to have full access into existing language because she thinks they can make a 'space' to fight against the male domination in language through language.

Showalter's psychoanalytic model identifies gender difference in the psyche and also in the artistic process. Her cultural model places feminist concerns in social contexts, acknowledging class, racial, national and historical differences and determinants among women. It also offers a collective experience that unites women over time and space. By focusing on culture they can reconcile and develop a coherent theory about female perspectives.

As feminism demands equal rights and opportunities for women in a political, economic, psychological, social and individual sense, it now represents a phenomenon that is identified with diverse ideas and is labeled as liberal, Marxist, Socialist, Existentialist, Psychoanalytic, Postmodern, Multicultural and finally Ecological. These levels stress the idea that feminism is not a monolithic ideal. Feminism has not been static; rather it has evolved throughout history to include many different subjective locations.

Since race, class, culture and sexuality also affect how people are treated, gender and sex are understood by taking into account cultural practices. Because of the history of male dominance, women in western societies have taken notice and action against the

inequality they have historically experienced. Feminism has been used to create awareness of gender inequality in society. It has also been used as a jumping off points in taking action to address inequality.

Seen in this context, 'Existential Feminism' that appeared in Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* stressed a particular focus on liberation. She proclaims that women can not be equal until they are free to change their condition. Women are not free because they are the 'Other' to man's self. This notion of the otherness of woman has the effect of equating masculinity and humanity and because "Women are caught up in a sort of social syntax in which they are never the Subject but always the 'Other'" (K.K.Ruthven, 114). Women who are supporters of this model state that they must rise above their oppression themselves and then choose not to become the second sex.

Julia Kristeva and Helen Cixous, who are concerned with feminist writing from psychoanalytic perspective, accept Lacan's account of language as a masculine order but do not accept his positive affirmation of that masculine order as equivalent to civilization or society. They question the assumption that femininity can only be seen from the point of view of phallic culture. Generally grouped under the French Feminist School (e'criture feminine) these critics believe that femininity offers a possible procedure for subverting the marginalizing mechanisms of power, thereby breaking it up.

Socialist feminism, which has interest in the roles assigned to women in our society, emerged as a combination of Marxist and radical feminism with a social analysis of patriarchy and capitalism. "It", according to Ruthven, "prompts studies of the way in which women are represented in literary texts" (19). The advocates of this thought found the reason of gender inequality in the unequal distribution of capital. They draw on Marxism and see the problem as economic exploitation. The men and women are placed into the condition of bourgeois and proletariat respectively and they propose to wage war against that unequal distribution.

Psychoanalytic feminism gathers Freudian and Lacanian arguments for a theory of feminine sexuality unconstrained by male norms and categories. But it rejects both Freud's claim of women's destiny as an outcome of biology and Marx's claim of woman's identity determined primarily by society's economic means of production. It analyses the formation of identities and stresses the prior importance of the mother.

Post-colonial feminists criticize western forms of feminism, notably radical feminism and its basic assumption i.e. universalisation of female experience. They argue that this assumption is based on the experience of white, middle-class women, for whom gender oppression is primary and that it can not so easily be applied to women for whom gender oppression comes second to racial or class oppression. "Post-colonial Feminism", Chris Beasley says in *Gender and Sexuality* (2005), "is concerned with challenging arrogantly universal claims and homogenizing tendencies in western thought" (79). These feminists do not approve the western feminism as the theory speaking in favor of women of all ranks and race. They take white feminists as imperialists who speak for the right of the white upper middle class women's interest that for women in general.

There are black feminists who feel themselves to be doubly if not triply oppressed: as black in a white supremacist society, as women in a patriarchy, and as workers under capitalism.

Feminism also incorporates feminists who object to being called 'feminist' and who believe that modern day feminists are biased by the lens that filters their world views. For them the term feminism has lost whatever revolutionary potential it once had because feminism is so compromised by patriarchy's accommodation of it as to be "styled more accurately phallofeminisme" (19-20).

So, we can conclude that the term feminism covers a broader scope and includes different aspects of humanity. Several dimensions have been showing ranging from liberal attitude and demand for equal rights for sex to the radical one voicing out the extreme

ideology that tends to theoretically turn the patriarchy upside down. There are liberal and radical feminisms and other feminists have developed with their affiliation to certain theoretical backgrounds. They include political feminism, Marxist feminism, Psychoanalytic feminism, French feminism, Bio-feminism, Postmodernist feminism, Black feminism and other. Hence, we can generalize feminism as a whole by grouping it with its assertion of different attitudes towards the contemporary patriarchal society in order to place women's issues within it.

I will hereafter discuss feminist criticism in two general fashions by focusing mainly on liberal feminism, and dealing radical feminism by incorporating Virginia Woolf's model of feminism within it as a tool for analyzing the protagonist's 'to and fro' movement from her parent's house to her husband's house in Shashi Deshpande's novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors*.

Radical Feminism

This type of feminist thought emerged as an important force in the western world in the 1960s. The earliest feminists were women who were active members of the Civil Rights Movement, who protested against the Vietnam War and struggled for the abolition of slavery. They realized that the strategies used to oppress the black were similar to those used to keep women subservient. An urgent need was felt to acknowledge the necessity of viewing woman as a separate group. This revolutionary feminism was a political necessity to fight racism, sexism, capitalism and patriarchal society as K.K Ruthven elaborates:

Women who joined the protest movements soon discovered, however, that the egalitarianism and altruism which motivated such interventions in race relations and international affairs were not thought by new left men as relevant to their personal relations with new left women, who were

expected to perform domestic and sexual services for the men who saw themselves as the decision makers. (27)

The pioneers of this feminism claimed that they were being exploited by men in the same way that blacks are exploited by whites and that sexism is no less intolerable than racism. Radical feminism, in this context, grew from a spare rib of leftist revolutionary politics. Its birthplace was America in the 1960s, where one of the problems faced by an educated new left was to sustain interests in revolutionary action among the poor whites and poorer blacks who constitute the working classes. The aim of radical feminism, then, is to break that androcentric hegemony which makes women feel that their own sense of reality is at odd with the 'reality' they are expected to conform to. These feminists, therefore, argue that feminist criticism must be an oppositional practice based on resistance to the dominant hegemony.

Radical feminism appeared in Elaine Showalter's interpretation of gender studies and got nourished by her followers. It has been established as a feminist literary criticism, an extreme rebellious stream which appears as hostile to patriarchy unlike liberal feminism as Valerie Bryson notes some of the criticisms of liberal feminism:

- a) Although liberal feminism recognized the collective interests of women and their oppression by men, it ignored the vested interests of men in continuing their subordination.
- b) It ignores the fact that ruling class does not normally surrender power simply because that power is found to be contrary to reason.
- c) To demand rights for women as individuals on the same basis as men is to ignore the fact that their shared domestic situation prevents full exercise of these rights.

(40)

Radical feminism, we see, then, offers a real challenge to and rejection of the liberal orientation towards the public world of men. It gives a positive value to

womanhood rather than supporting a notion of assimilation into arenas of activity associated with men. The notion of sexual oppression is intimately connected with a strong emphasis on the sisterhood of women. Concentrating on this theme Bryson further says, “Women as a group have interests opposed to those of men; these interests unite them in a common sisterhood that transcends the division of class or race and means that women should struggle to achieve their own liberation” (181). It encourages some degree of separatism from men because it recommends putting women first making them a primary concern. This approach is inclined to accord lesbianism, an honored place as a form of mutual recognition between women.

Radical feminists demand in literature an expression of female sexuality which will burst through the bonds of male logic with a power that defines the tyranny of logocentric meaning. They state the most strongly of all feminist traditions that men as a group are the main enemy. This approach wants to bring about radical changes in the social configuration in which the position of women is not only redefined but also reestablished as a respectable and important.

Seen in this context, different social institutions are only instruments in dominating woman. It is through such institutions’ helping men have been able to suppress women into their interests. With the help of norms as prescribed by the institutions like marriage, family and morality, men have created a set up of women’s behavior and hence demand suppressed roles from them. This concept certainly forbids women to realize “that the primary duty of anyone [is] to find who he or she really [is] and to become that person” (Jacobus 560). Such a social system makes women to be treated as their husband’s property. These thinkers argue that primary duty of anyone is for him/herself at first and only then to others. When Nora in *A Doll’s House* finds herself in similar situation, she starts to question such social institutions for these forbid her to realize who she really is. As her husband talks about moral feelings, perhaps with the help of this he would be able

to make her stay at his house, she reveals, "I've learned now that certain laws are different from what I'd imagined them to be; but I can't accept that such laws can be right" (Scholes 1085). With this assertion she questions the foundation of morality itself.

Radical feminism usually presents a historically continuous clear-cut difference between men and women. This theory generally advocates a revolutionary model of social change. The main issue of radical feminist writing is to counter women's supposedly natural, biological inferiority and subordination within patriarchal society by asserting their at least equal status in relation to men. A crucial aspect of this issue is for women to gain control over their own bodies, biology and to value and celebrate women's bodies.

Their basic assumption is that women as a group have interests opposed to those of men; these interests unite them in a common sisterhood that transcends the division of class or race, and means that women should struggle together to achieve their own liberation. Concentrating on this basic assumption Valerie Bryson notes, "Insistence on the oppression shared by all women also obscured the very real difference that existed amongst women, and seemed to deny the possibility that women could also oppress each other" (183).

Radical feminism, therefore, challenges the legitimacy of male perspectives and reveals the falsity of their claims for objectivity and universality. From this perspective, these feminists argue for a revolutionary struggle against men that could not be won by polite requests for equal opportunities or changes in the law.

But most of these writers got impetus from Virginia Woolf's concept of equality in terms of sex for she held for "radical changes that would or should occur as women's freedom and their suppressed values began to affect conceptions of power, family and social life, in the past shaped by men" (Adams 817). But rather than typical modern radical feminism of 1960s, Virginia Woolf held different ideas. Never adopting a feminist stance, she continually examined the problems facing women in society. Rejecting a

feminist consciousness, she hoped to achieve a balance between a ‘male’ self-realization and ‘female’ self-annihilation. She also rejected that type of feminism which was simply an inverted male-chauvinism.

Although generally taken as precursor of modern radical feminism, writers often find her not initiating separatist mode of feminism that tries to subvert society. Her treatment of androgyny is the stance that most of the writers like to associate with her. It is, therefore, B. Sudipta says, “Virginia Woolf’s idea of feminism [...] is not of an extreme nature. She only desires a certain amount of freedom and not equality. Her theory of feminism was a desire for wholeness and harmony” (41). She, sometimes, imagined a society in which men and women would come together in purpose and desire. She, therefore, argued for creative androgyny because a mind that is purely masculine can not create, anymore than a mind that is purely feminine. Her much discussed essay *A Room of One’s Own* (1927) is also based on this theme in which she depicts the socio-political-cultural condition of women in early 20th century. Women had always subordinated their will at their fathers, husbands and even sons for they had no separate ‘room’, i.e. identity, female voice, their place in the family, society and in the culture. Woolf’s idea then is a more moderate position that seeks to erode separatism in the interests of integration as to incorporate balanced gender roles into social mainstream.

Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism addresses the problems of unequal rights or artificial barriers to women’s participation in the public world, beyond the family and household by explaining women’s position in society. It focuses upon the elimination of constraints facing women and gaining equal civil rights for women as public citizens. As such, public citizenship and the attainment of equality with men in the public arena are central to this feminism. It reflects the concept of a fundamentally and sexually undifferentiated human nature by emphasizing that women can do anything what men do. Giving prior importance to

women's position in society, liberal feminists do not perceive the sexes to be at war or dismiss that which has been associated with men. They emphasize reform of society rather than revolutionary changes as initiated by radical feminists. Liberal feminists, with their assertion of collective responsibility for the formation and development of liberal society reject strategies which might be less acceptable to mainstream women and men and dismiss critical and revolutionary agendas for they support equal opportunity between sexes and do not want to either prove women as superior to men folk or voice their slogans against men.

Chris Beasley in *Gender and Sexuality* finds Liberalism a lynchpin for the development of liberal feminism. For her, liberal feminism is a response to and development of Liberalism. When mainstream Liberalism came into existence it was based on the Enlightenment concept of an autonomous rational being. For the progenitors of this concept of liberalism, all those who can reason are capable of independent thought and action hence should be able to participate in society. The inability of liberalism to accommodate and implement this theory in practice was, in fact, one of the causes of emergence of liberal feminism. Chris Beasley reflecting upon this issue says, "Liberal feminism, in this context, pointed out that liberal, supposedly universal standard of humanity, equality and reason were not in fact universal because women were denied full social participation, public life and education" (30). This paradoxical nature at the heart of liberalism, which asserted equality and liberty for all yet maintained a rigorous inequality in relation to certain groups, should be understood in terms of the particular meanings given these words, argues Beasley.

Liberal feminism from the late eighteenth century to the present day has pointed out that full social participation and public life has been denied to women. Liberal feminists assert that the universalistic claims of the Enlightenment and its descendent Liberalism, which attempted to counter the social hierarchy of medieval custom and to

extend social status, did not include women. In excluding women, who constitute half of the population of society, according to Beasley, liberalism turned into a narrowly 'western masculine political project'. For them, liberalism's all-encompassing pretensions are built upon the assumption that not only western men matter, that men's equality in the west is equivalent to equality for all human beings.

The collective and social justice political program of this form of liberal feminism, then, is evident in its focus upon overcoming discrimination against women as a class or group. It is also evident in the attention given to repealing or reforming social obstacles to women's public participation. This orientation towards assimilation rather than revolution is also revealed in the liberal feminist concern to reverse women's under-representation in various areas of public life especially those associated with higher status, economic reward and authority. "The aim of liberal feminism", according to Beasley, "is to enable women to achieve the status of autonomous individuals in public life as equal of men, and as equally capable of public participation" (32).

Liberal feminism, then, is criticism of liberalism in that it argues against its exclusion of women in its project of universality and objectivity. But it is not totally biased against the modernist thinking of liberalism because most of the liberal feminists hold belief on the agendas of liberalism such as belief on reason, improvement of society and its institutions, equality, liberty and so on. What liberal feminists, in particular, argue for women is to be included within this project of liberalism. So, rather than aiming at bringing revolution into social scenario, liberal feminism holds belief on society and its improvement by accommodating women into the issue of equality and liberty because women are also capable of reasoning. Liberal feminism, then, in its early period, "drew on the liberal tradition's value of equality and individual freedom to argue that, just as social status at birth was no longer a legitimate basis on which to discriminate among men as

liberals argued, so also sex at birth was no longer a legitimate basis on which to discriminate against women” (Beasley 31).

Unlike radical feminism which attempts to subvert society and its tradition for it is the cause of female oppression with its system of ‘patriarchy’, liberal feminism is an assimilationist and reformist approach. It aims to fit women into existing society and to remove obstacles to their public advancement. Its willingness to accommodate and celebrate the ‘virtues of mainstream capitalist democracies’ makes it a form of feminism that is comparatively widely accepted today.

Male dominance has always been perpetuated by men who documented the history of social life as a male endeavor. As texts were written by men, they assumed or promoted their own superiority. Women were assumed to lack intelligence, but in actuality, women were not allowed to be literate. Feminism, as a reaction against this trend, came into existence and became dominant approach in literature in the late nineteenth century with the recognition of women’s roles and achievements. It began when women became conscious of their relationship to language, society and of themselves as writers.

Mary Wollstonecraft, in this context, laid down a tradition of liberal feminism and placed women’s rights and sexual differences at the center of social and political debate. Her writings challenge male birth right, advocate women’s equality and rationality, and argue against the degradation and subjugation of women. In reading Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, we see how industrialized Europe of the eighteenth century worked against the married, bourgeois women of the time. According to her, these women were like the members of ‘feathered race’, birds confined to cages who have nothing to do but plum themselves. To be a middle class lady is, for her, to sacrifice health, liberty, and virtue for whatever prestige, pleasure, and power a husband can provide.

Although Wollstonecraft did not use terms such as ‘socially constructed gender roles’, she denied that women are by nature more pleasure seeking and pleasure giving than man. She reasoned that if men were confined to the same cages women find themselves locked in, they would develop the same characters. Therefore, she focused on the equal opportunity for women as men to educate to develop the rational faculty. In the book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* Wollstonecraft argues that women must be given knowledge and education so that they can make rational choices. Wollstonecraft was particularly concerned to refute the ideas of the philosopher Rousseau, who described the ideal education of a young man, had included a chapter on the very different education of ‘Sophy’. In response to this idea of Rousseau, Wollstonecraft is mainly concerned with the four ideas that are as follows:

- a) She refused to accept that women were less capable of reason than men.
- b) She argued that if men and women are equally possessed of reason they must be equally educated in its use.
- c) As men’s and women’s common humanity is based on their shared and God-given possession of reason, then ‘virtue’ must be the same for both sexes.
- d) The idea of equal worth now leads irrevocably to that of equal ‘rights’ (qtd. in Bryson 22-23)

It was in this context that Wollstonecraft insisted that women had an independent right to education, employment, property and the protection of the civil law.

Wollstonecraft did not expect that education and freedom of choice would lead most women to reject their traditional role, but argued that they would enable them to perform it better because if men “would [...] but snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers- in a word, better citizens” (Bryson 24).

Rather than engaging herself into superiority/inferiority of sexes, she sought to value women's domestic responsibilities and to show that domestic duties, properly performed, were a form of rational citizenship. We find, therefore, that Wollstonecraft insisted that the differences between the sexes were a product of education and environment and not of nature. She attacked the way in which women's mind and bodies had been distorted to please men, and she demanded that boys and girls be given the same education.

William Thompson also argued in the similar fashion in his *Appeal on Behalf of Women* (1825) in which he insisted that women are entitled to full political rights including representation and participation in affairs of state. For him, their intellectual capacity is as great as men's, and biological differences can never be an argument against political rights. He believed that the true interests of the sexes could be reconciled for if women were free then men would find the pleasures of equal companionship far outweighed those of despotism.

Writing about one hundred years later, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor joined Wollstonecraft in elaborating rationality. But they took it both morally- as autonomous decision-making- and prudently as self-fulfillment. They believed that the ordinary way to maximize aggregate happiness or pleasure is to permit individuals to pursue whatever they desire. They also focused on provisions of civil liberties and economic opportunities. Mill and Taylor, somehow, differed from Wollstonecraft in insisting that if we are to achieve sexual equality or gender justice, then society must not only give women the same education as men but also provide women with the same civil liberties and economic opportunities that men enjoy.

John Stuart Mill in his *The Subjection of Women* agreed that women appeared to be in many ways inferior to men, but argued that this was a consequence of social pressure and faulty education. As he saw different roles played by two sexes, according to Valerie

Bryson, he argued, “Women should be free to follow the career of their choice, and they should not be forced into marriage through economic necessity; if, however, they do choose marriage, then this is their career, and they should accept the responsibilities that it entails” (56).

Mill’s wife Harriet Taylor in *Enfranchisement of Women* argued in the similar trend when she says that a married woman should contribute to the household income, even if the aggregate sum were but little increased by it. But she somehow departs from J.S Mill in her insistence, arguing like Wollstonecraft, “on the dignity and worth of women’s traditional work and the need for female education if it is to be well performed” (Bryson 58). In brief, both of these writers argued that in order to be partners rather than the servants of their husbands, wives must earn an income outside the home.

By the ‘second wave feminism’ in the 1960s and 1970s, most women in western countries had gained basic social and political rights such as the vote. But some of the feminists asserted that women continued to be marked as lesser because they were judged ‘as women’ and only secondly individual human beings. They argued that despite most gaining formal rights, women remained confined to the domestic and were still subject to many legal and customary constraints which significantly hindered their ability to access public life and its opportunities as men did. Betty Friedan appeared in this situation with the publication of her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) in which she contends that the idea of women finding satisfaction exclusively in the traditional role of wife and mother has left women at least middle-class suburban, white heterosexual wives feeling empty and miserable. Deprived of meaningful goals, writes Friedan, these women dust and polish their furniture as if they were Sisyphus rolling down an enormous rock up a steep hill only to have it roll down again.

Concentrating on the situation faced by American women as Betty Friedan has reflected upon in her book, Valerie Bryson writes, “The whole of an American’s life was

geared towards attracting and keeping a husband, and serving the needs of him and his children; denied the expression of her own humanity, she was forced to live her life vicariously parasitic upon the activities of her husband in the 'real world' outside her home" (160).

Such a life, Friedan claims, could not lead to happiness because nothing could compensate for the inner emptiness. 'The feminine mystique' which taught that the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity was, she claimed, more dangerous and insidious than earlier traditional values.

Friedan's cure for suburban housewives' addiction to motherhood and wifehood was to get college education and then use them productively in the full-time, public work outside the home. Unlike Wollstonecraft, Taylor, and Mill, Friedan advocates a balance of women's assimilation into the workplace with a counter assimilation of men into family. In fact, Friedan was not asking women to sacrifice marriage and motherhood for a high-powered career because she rejected any attack on conventional morality and family life. "With the help of maternity leave and workplace nurseries she believed that a woman could combine long-term career plans with their family responsibilities" (Bryson 161).

Her goal, therefore, was to allow women to live for themselves as well as for others by being educated to their full potential and enabled to follow a career outside the home. This, she believed, would also create new possibilities for living with men, which could now be based on shared work and values rather than inequality. She, even, claimed that the long term interests of men and society as a whole would be served by sexual equality.

We see, thus, most feminists agree that the single most important goal of women's liberation is sexual equality, or as it seems sometimes termed gender justice. What they wish to do is free women from oppressive gender roles- i.e., from those roles that have

been used as excuses or justifications for giving women a lesser place, or no place at all in the academy, the forum, and the marketplace.

Feminism in Indian Social Context

Cultural model of different society allots different roles to its members. Every society has its own way of life; therefore it ascribes certain roles to people. In terms of status and roles that people have in society, the importance of their position is altered. In a patriarchal social structure the status of male is held higher and so is his role. This allotment of role has certain traditional significance associated with it and thus, a person with a higher social status exercises his power over others. Indian society is also patriarchal. So, males have significant role in social mainstream. They hold superior position in different social institutions like marriage, family and tradition. And reverse is the status of women as the prevailing tradition and cultural norms determine their position in society. Regarding the position of Indian Hindu woman Tania Sarkar, indicating at the gender norms and values prescribed for her, says, “So was discipline exercised upon her body by iron laws of absolute chastity, extending beyond the death of her husband, through and indissoluble, non-consensual infant form of marriage through austere widowhood and through her proven capacity for self-immolation” (203).

This presents the discriminatory social norms existing in Indian society and moral and religious significance attached with them. As literature is the reflection of society in general, Indo-English fictions are not exception and the patriarchal social enclosure is typically settings for these texts. The feminist literary criticism practiced in the west, in this context, is also applicable in the context of India.

There are various scholars who have started viewing Indian writing in English through the feminist spectacles. For R.K. Dhawan, feminism is greatly followed in Indian English fiction. Feminists in India are pleading that discrimination against women must be stopped. Though modern women adopted western social ideas, they were in actual social

situation, a queer mixture of east and west. Though the structures and institutions of traditional culture are disrupted with new modes of economic activities and habitation and women get education and liberation, they are exposed to identify and reflect the virtues of womanhood as portrayed in literature and mythology and fulfill their prime responsibility as a wife. But if a woman is capable of making a mark in her profession, she thinks, she should be recognized and treated as an equal. “The contemporary woman does not want to conform to the traditional image anymore. She wants her due- her rightful place alongside her male counterpart in the Indian society” (Dhawan 12). Here R.K. Dhawan focuses on male-dominated Indian society where the woman is still regarded as second person.

The Indian woman is particularly conditioned by traditions and conventions and willingly accepts the responsibility of being the custodian of family honor and prestige. But on the other side, modern woman does not find any sense in being acquiescent. As she feels the needs for self-expression and individual fulfillment she begins the question of conventions and defies the tradition, which tends to undermine her importance and individuality. Chaman Nahal in *Indian Women Novelists* writes for different form of feminism in Indian fiction to address this situation. She examines the replacement model in feminine fiction. According to her, it is very difficult to construct a replacement model. One can not escape the myths- the conditioning of the myth with which one can grow up. She further writes, “unless we can not construct new myth, we can not construct replacement model” (31). The historic role played by Indian women in their own capacity definitely provides an alternative replacement model.

The rigidity of Indian traditional society puts up repression which is very severe and the resultant suffering often assumes pathetic proportions for sensitive individuals. In this circumstance Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, as discussed by Hans Berten in *Literary Theory: The Basics*, “examines the controversy between the colonized Indians and their British colonizers over what she calls ‘widow-sacrifice’, the burning of widows on the

funeral pyre of their deceased husbands” (213). The Indian texts, in this context, presented the woman as choosing for duty and tradition while never allowing women, the victims, to speak. This is perhaps why the Indian English novelists consistently treated the neurotic phenomenon in their fictional works. This is a way to protest against the establishment.

Indian women writers such as Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande and Ruth Pravar Jhabvala present women as central characters in their fictions. In the novels of these writers, we come across women who are traditional in their way of living but modern in their outlook and capacity to retain their individuality. Some of them present their protagonists who are conformists and traditionalists while others present women who opt for modernity for convenience and face challenges in their quest for self-fulfillment. Here, we can find different forms of feminism presented by the Indian woman writers.

Modality for Analysis

Conscious of the injustices done to women on the basis of their sex feminism, therefore, struggles against this gender discrimination. It wants to change contemporary social scenario so that they can be treated equally. Holding the belief that contemporary bias can be altered through reformation of society this mode of theory holds view that no one need to subvert the social structure for it is the foundation of human life. The mistreatment on the basis of gender must be changed by improving social structure but not by rejecting it at all. It argues that women must be given the same opportunities as men, only then will they know their true abilities and only then will society reap the full benefits from the talents of its entire members. The stereotypical images and representations are only construction but not the essence of women. The demand of the right to education is one of its principles because it helps females to perform the dignity worth of women’s traditional work. Due to the lack of education women can not perform their duties well. They just submit themselves to any conservatism. They stick to the traditional way of life untouched by the changes of new age accepting that they are secondary citizens.

The desire to be incorporated within society with the establishment of equality in terms of their sex is central to this feminism. Since the system of society and its institutions have made women subservient to their entire life, the questioning of such system and its institutions is also a well-known phenomenon to this feminism. The questioning is not to reject the basic premises of such institutions. It is only directed to the reformation of prejudiced system and norms against women which are not based on any objectives evidences. Such questioning is targeted to the institutions like marriage, family, morality and religion in order to raise the position of women by reforming them.

Availability of education helps to acquire knowledge of outside world which in turn helps women to understand the system in which they live. Therefore, the demand of availability of education to all women and the projection of such characters into the works of art is prime focus of such feminists and women writers. It liberates them from the inculcated ideas of self-depreciating female sex. Women of this attitude resent the assimilation of all the patriarchal ideas and the internalization of the way of life in such society. It is only through the help of education women can broaden the horizon of their thinking and thereby initiating them into economic independence through profession. The thinking that economic autonomy helps women face challenges targeted to subdue the idea of freedom from age-old shackles of tradition can only be reinforced with knowledge. Then education, for these thinkers, is also an important issue. It helps them to be aware accordingly. It can outline the basic framework for their freedom and independent self relative to social system and its institutions, hence not to subvert the presumptions of social system as a whole. The unnegotiated autonomy and freedom from society only inculcate the sense of isolation, alienation and guilt into the people who aspires to achieve it.

Then, these thinkers agree that women's servitudes in marriage must be abolished, they must be allowed to free access to education and employment. They believe that if

their roles and duties are respected then they will feel somehow liberated from the degradation of their identity within this patriarchal enclosure. Rejecting attack on conventional morality and family life, these writers believe that with the reformation of society women can combine long term career plans with their family responsibilities. They believe that the crucial issue is to reveal to women the possibilities of freedom and fulfillment outside home and the artificial nature of restrictions that currently confined them. The attention given to repealing or reforming social obstacles to women's public participation and the orientation towards assimilation rather than revolution is revealed in feminist concern to reverse women's under-representation in various areas of public life especially those associated with higher status, economic reward and authority.

We see, therefore, that this form of feminism centers on the notion of acculturation into arenas of activity associated with men. It signifies the awakening of woman into a new realization of her place and position in family and society, conscious of their individuality. The advocacy of a woman trying to assert and ascertain her rights as a human being and her determination to fight for equality is central to this feminism. Focal point of this mode of theory is that women be conscious of their emotional needs and also strive for self-fulfillment, rejecting the existing traditions and social set-up, and longing for a more liberal and unconventional ways of life. The reformation rather than subversion of society through revolution, removal of obstacles generated by gender discrimination, availability of equal opportunity of education, belief on morality and convention are some of the presumptions of these feminists. With the assertion of renewed relationship between the members of society and family, they advocate for the creation of feminine space within patriarchal mainstream so that their pitiable condition would be improved. In this new situation, the females will no longer continue their servitude. Rather they will feel liberated from the age old long shackles of tradition and confinement.

The issues discussed above have generated a lot of arguments and visions that are crucial in establishing ground for the protagonist, Sarita, of Deshpande's novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. They have presented certain perspectives that clarify the motives and intentions which make Sarita decide to face her husband ultimately.

III. Ambivalent Female Identity in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*

The present study seeks to reveal the ambivalent nature of the protagonist Sarita in the novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. Sarita shows a sense of attachment to the society and its system while at the same time she resents to its inferiorizing females because of their sex. But ultimately she tries to balance these positions with a sense of facing whatever comes ahead. Therefore, the textual analysis of this study will be based on three subtitles and they are as follows:

1. Sarita's Departure from Patriarchal Social Mainstream.
2. Sarita's Sense of Attachment to Patriarchal Society.
3. Sarita's Attempt to Create Feminine Space.

Sarita's Departure from Patriarchal Social Mainstream

Awareness of the pervasiveness of genderly discriminated society makes females depart from the society itself. The trend of always inferiorizing females in terms of their sex increases the sense of rebellion in them because they know that this demand of female subservience is not reasonable. Within this society males are given importance. In each of social conventions, males are prioritized over females. They are valued highly because tradition itself has allowed males primary role where women have no role at all. Therefore, women who are aware of this sexist gender know that this discrimination is only an artificial obstacle to confine women into subservient roles. Because of this, women are always treated as secondary to men. Women who are aware of these injustices, long to defy it and social norms as well. In the novel, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita knows this treatment very well. She can no more tolerate inequality between brother and sister. She is aware of the fact that her mother is very attached to her son. Her attitude is a typical one- i.e. he is male child and therefore one who will propagate the family lineage. He is prioritized over Saru because male child is considered to give 'agni' to his dead

parents. The soul of the dead person would otherwise wander in ferment. Concentrating on this issue of traditional value attached with the male child S.P. Swain says, “The male child is considered superior for he will light the funeral pyre and perform all rites including ‘Shradha’ to placate the soul of the dead: ‘who lit the pyre? She had no son to do that for her. Dhruva had been seven when he died’” (35). Sarita is aware of this gender discrimination. When she expresses her wish to stay with her mother all life, her mother says, “You can’t” (40). But her brother can stay because “he is different. He is a boy” (40). This treatment enrages Saru. Therefore, she rebels against her mother: “If you’re a woman, I don’t want to be one” (55). It is this which makes Saru resent the role of a daughter. The mother sees Saru only as a burden to be eased, a problem to be solved, a responsibility to be dispensed with, a person who has no right to any choice in life: “Let her go for a B.Sc. [...] you can get her married in two years and our responsibility will be over” (131). The parents always feel a burden to their daughter and their concern is always to get eased of this burden by getting them married. The conversation between the daughter and her mother in the novel reflects this attitude:

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’s different. He’s a boy. (40)

This is plight of not only Saru but millions who are born girl. The fault lies with their gender, not with them.

Since education helps women to realize that the barriers to them in public participation are only artificial and unreasonable, they always aspire to achieve it. It also helps them to assert their individuality because it opens the outside world for them. It has the chance to make them independent and free from gender biasness. Therefore, they want to acquire education anyhow. In the novel, Sarita receives education in spite of her mother's objection. Her education makes her see the difference in the treatment of a son and a daughter by the same parents. It makes her see the scorn to which a girl is a subject since she has very little to do with the propagation of the family. Therefore, she looks forward to the role of a wife with the hope that it will give her relief from the oppression of the mother, it will give her freedom. Because of this she marries a boy from a lower caste against her parents' wishes. Her marriage to Manu is a sign of her turning away from the traditional ways and values her orthodox mother adhered to. She marries to attain autonomy of the self and to secure the lost love in her parental home. It is expressed by Prasanna Sree Sathupati, as she says, "The woman in order to achieve her freedom seeks marriage as an alternative to the bondage created by the parental family. [...] she resents the role of a daughter and looks forward to the role of wife with the hope that her new role will help her in winning her freedom" (17).

Marriage is the social institution that demands subservient role of women. It allows men to have full control over their spouse as they are considered secondary citizens. Therefore, any decision to run on marital life is taken by the male counterpart. It even demands subservient role of women in sexual intercourse where anyone's unwillingness surely damages the enjoyment people often have. Anyone who is aware of the deprivation to women even in such intimate relationship causing intense excitement does not enjoy it at all. The intervening of gender even in such a blissful act increases a sense of radical departure from the institution of marriage itself. Therefore, for Sarita marriage is another trap where she feels like a caged animal. Making enormous sacrifices on her profession

the protagonist begins to understand that marriage obstructs her growth as an individual. She sees marriage only in terms of the dark rooms where terror awaits her. Here, she thinks, “To defy your parents and family to resolve to get married in spite of them, and then to be obstructed by the lack of a home” (31-32). Reflecting on this fate of the protagonist S.P. Swain says, “Her second home becomes the very prison she had escaped. She is soon disappointed with her husband” (35). Marriage becomes only another enclosure that restricts the movement towards autonomy and self realization.

When the elixir of married life turns into venom Sarita is soon disappointed with her husband Manu. Though she is not only the bread winner of the family and she has also to provide butter, her husband can not bear people greeting her and ignoring him. When this increases, he asserts his masculinity through sexual assaults upon Saru. Thus, the benevolent, cheerful husband by day turns a lecherous rapist at night. At first there was affirmation of love at their union as she says, “I was hungry for love. Each act of sex was a triumphant assertion of our love. Of my being loved. Of my being wanted. If I ever had any doubts, I had only to turn to him and ask him to prove his love for me. And he would ... again and again and again” (35). But love disappears from her life as gender interplays into their love-making and the sexual intercourse turns out to be a sadistic intervention:

I woke up to darkness and an awareness of fear. Panic. Then pain [...]. The hurting hands, the savage teeth, the monstrous assault of a horribly familiar body. And above me, a face I could not recognize. Total non-comprehension, complete bewilderment, paralyzed me for a while. [...] But my body, hurt and painful, could do nothing against the fearful strength which overwhelmed me. [...] And then, mercifully, the end, the face still hovering over mine, changing as the body relaxed, becoming the familiar known one of my husband's. (102)

Because of this, Saru begins to loathe the man-woman relationship which has no love in it. She now arrives at a realistic perception of love as physical instinct. Saru says, “Love... there was no such thing between man and woman. [...] only a need which both fought against futilely, the very futility turning into the thing called love” (65). Reflecting on this subject Premila Paul observes, “Unable to come to terms with the fact that he is a failure in life, Manu lets his wounded male pride manifest itself in the form of sexual sadism ‘the hurting hands, the savage teeth, the monstrous assault of a horrible familiar body’. Bed is the only place where he can assert his animal power over her” (64).

Women reject social convention and tradition as they are instruments in moulding women into their submissive roles. They know that these obstruct their growth as women searching for independent self and free identity. This is what Sarita actually does in the novel by defying anything that comes ahead to put obstacles in her search for independent self and equal status. Commenting on this nature of the protagonist, P. Ramamoorthi elaborates:

Shashi Deshpande’s heroines reject rituals that are vestiges of the past. In their rejection of their mother, they also discard the meaningless rituals like circumambulating the tulsi plant. Both Indu and Saru refuse to undertake such rituals which are meant to increase the life span of their husbands. The rejection is an indication of their autonomy and their capacity to see their lives independent of their mother/ past. (41-42)

The parental home, a symbol of tradition and old world values, has no room for the protagonist in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. She breathes the air of rituals that obstruct the growth of a woman as a being. Mother, the possible model after whom she must mould her life, looks a bad model and hence rejected. In her desire for freedom “she seek[s] through [her] marriage a room of [her] own and autonomy” (Ramamoorthi 43).

Since marriage, morality and family are the foundational institutions of social system, every woman must follow the codes prescribed for her. But Sarita, aware of the fact that these very institutions force women to be marginalized in society, rejects the very foundation of such institutions. It is because of this, she feels no guilt in extra-marital sexual affairs. Her sexual situation forces Sarita to extra-marital relationship. It is reflected by these words: “What is significant about such relationship is that [she] suffers no guilt and [she] begins to evolve a new code of sexual ethics. [Her] path to individuation is marked by contacts with diverse experiences such as extra-marital affairs” (Ramamoorthi 43-44).

The questioning of the social institutions of love and marriage indicates the spirit of Sarita. It is an indication that the ‘passive feminine has ceased to exist. Instead, we have the heroine, ‘highly intelligent woman,’ who questions incessantly, confronts her problem inwardly and analyzes it objectively. The result is that love/marriage becomes meaningless and loses status as props of life as “the code of our age is neither love nor romance but sex” (120). R. Mala, extending this theme, says, “The heroines of Deshpande resort to freedom not only intellectually but sexually too. For, their sexual starvation forces them to seek recourse to extra-marital sex” (56).

Sarita always wants to attain freedom and independent self. Therefore, she defies traditional codes at the slightest threat to her mother’s house. “Sarita [...] defies her mother to become a doctor, defies her caste to marry outside, and defies social conventions by using Boozie to advance her career” (Iyengar 758). Marriage is also viewed critically and condemned as a euphemism for lust. “Marriage is nothing but two people brought together after ‘cold-blooded bargaining’ to meet, mate and reproduce so that generation might continue” (Mala 55).

Sarita openly advocates for the equal rights of women in their family which in its traditional form, confines them. She wants to bring change in family system thereby

improving women's situation. Therefore, whenever we look at Sarita among her friends and among other gatherings, we find her always concerned with gender biasness, female autonomy and reassessing the man woman relationship. Among her two close friends, Smita and Nalu, she likes Nalu because "Saru has tremendous respect for the dignified, self-reliant teacher friend Nalu who despises all compromises and remains single to lead a meaningful life of convictions" (Paul 71). Sarita ponders over the situation and says, "It's easy to generalize, she thought, and say she is bitter because she never married, never bore a child. But that would be as stupid as calling me fulfilled because I got married and I have borne two children" (109). It is also because of this knowledge that Sarita finds Smita disgusting. Sarita does not like Smita's willingness at her name to be changed by her husband because he likes the name 'Geetanjali'. Sarita sees this only as an instance of inferiorizing females and sardonically says, "This drastic change of identity, changing both the names that identified you for so many years ... how then do you know yourself, and who you are" (106)?

The gender discrimination of society from time immemorial has left a sense of self-depreciation among the women who try to come out of its grip. Sense of self-contempt for their sex has been inculcated into females. Sarita also senses the same thing and remembering the harsh treatment at their period she starts to hate even biological attributes of their body because on the basis of which women are inferiorized and treated harshly. She, therefore, begs, "Oh, God, let it not happen to me. Just this once and no more. Let there be a miracle and let me be the one female to whom it doesn't happen" (55). She further expresses: "A kind of shame that engulfed me, making me want to rage, to scream against the fact that put me in the same class as my mother" (55). She even hates female body:

If you're a woman, I don't want to be one, I thought resentfully, watching her body. The cleft which ran down her back, a deep furrow, dividing her

body sharply in two. The two buttocks sharply outlined by the kind of sari she wore, tucked in between her legs. The way her hips moved as she walked. I can remember walking as stiffly as possible, holding my peevils rigid, willing it not to move, so that I would be as unlike her as possible. (55)

This shows Sarita's resentment towards female sex as on the basis of which society imposes obstacles on them. She, therefore, wants to be liberated from it because "to get married and end up doing just what your mother did, seemed to me not only terrible but damnable" (126-127).

Knowing that the problem would have never arrived if she had submitted completely to the role of a wife in traditional society, Sarita never thought of giving up her position because as an educated woman she could not endure such mistreatments. She even thought that her profession was the root cause of the problem. If she left her profession, then she would stay as a housewife and Manu's inferior feeling would have never aroused. But she could not sacrifice herself completely effacing her feminine ideas. It is therefore, she, at first, said, "It is because I am something more than his wife that he has become what he is. If I can go back to being nothing but his wife... and yet was I ever that? ... he may no longer resent me. And then....

But no, the answer was ... we will be happy together ever after" (70).

But she instantly remarks: "However often I calculated, however many methods I used, that result evaded me. At best it was ... he may leave me alone. But even that was enough for me. To obtain such a respite, an interlude of peace, I would give up much. Even my profession" (70). Here, Saru seems to say that she would give up anything even her profession, only weapon to assert her individuality, if she were to get her freedom. It is only a self-deception in her part. Indira Bhatt, concentrating on this issue, further clarifies:

Saru tries her best to keep up their married life, by suggesting that she might give up her profession. But Manu likes to live in comfort and without her money that is not possible. If Saru accepted his double behavior, the marriage would continue, and Manu would be happy. But such self-deception is not in Saru's nature, and that is why she has to find a way. (50)

Here, Bhatt seems to say that Saru is of the opinion that it is the wife who has to break away from the old images of womanhood and assert her way without feeling any guilt for deviating from the tradition-rooted role-models of Hindu women.

Sarita does not find safe-landing even in religious institution because it demands secondary role of women as opposed to their essence. Based only on the constructions of their images, such religious institutions help to propagate dominated roles of women in society. When she observes a Sanskrit story, she reveals the conflicting issues such story helps to perpetuate in order to sanctify oppression on women. She says:

The woman who would not disturb her husband's sleep even to save her child from the fire. A woman so blessed, it was said, that Agni himself came and saved the child. Now she thought...who wrote that story? A man, of course. Telling all women for all time... your duty to *ME* comes first. And women, poor fools believed him. (188)

Here, Sarita sees the foundation of religious institution based on male's attitudes ignoring other half of the population. It is therefore P. Ramamoorthi says that the protagonists of Deshpande "refuse to undertake rituals which are meant to increase the life span of their husbands. The rejection is an indication of their autonomy [...]" (42).

For Sarita literary works are also vehicles of carrying social system to its coming generation. So, they are also full of patriarchal notions of society and hence argue for continuation of such system. As they are reflection of society, they demand subservient position of women. So, Sarita finds them incapable of doing justice to women. Therefore,

she often refers to Vidya who was an ‘incipient women’s libber’. She still remembers the words Vidya once said- i.e. “[Shakespeare] has a very limited vision. [...] What I’m saying is that his is a typical man’s view of life; the men at the center, the woman always on the periphery. [...] But it’s not just their roles. It’s the way he made the woman’s personality merge into the stronger colors of a man’s personality” (141). But when Vidya changed her ideas and conformed to the social system she sarcastically perceive what Vidya had said, “Ashwin doesn’t like the idea of my going on the stage. His family disapproves too. They don’t mind my associating with the theatre occasionally but, no acting, directing or anything like that” (142). The way Saru perceives her words, we see that she resents the role of husband always controlling on his spouse. Saru condemns such women as “silly martyrs” and “idiotic heroines” (Paul 70).

Sarita is conscious of the worldwide feminist ideas which reflect how the women are suffering from age old tradition and social system. It is even because of these ideas she is familiar with, Saru can not submit herself to her husband. Freedom that women lacked because for her “my mother had no room of her own. She slept in her bed like any overnight guest in a strange place. [...] And I have so much my mother lacked. But neither she nor I have ‘a room of our own’” (122-123). Premila Paul, focusing on this position of Sarita, explains: “*The Dark Holds No Terrors* is certainly a protest novel [...]. There are references to the Women’s Liberation Ideologue Betty Friedan and Virginia Woolf’s idea of a woman’s right to ‘a room of her own’” (71-72). The concept of social convention is that “everything in a girl’s life, it seemed, was shaped to that single purpose of pleasing a male” (148). Therefore, rather than focusing on women’s liberation or their independence, society has reserved another domain for women that is to make them beautiful as much as possible therefore attracting a male. This is what Sarita instantly scorns at when her mother gave her a pair of earring when she was at fifteen saying “You’re a big girl now. Time you had something nice to wear in your ears. We must make you some gold bangles

next year” (155). Sarita instead thinks: “So that was it! It was not for me, not to please me and make me happy, but because I should, as a growing girl, have these things to wear” (155).

The protagonist of the novel has bitter feelings about social experiences that are instances of gender discrimination. Society always allots secondary role to women therefore always behind men. Sarita resents this pervasively discriminating factor. For her, these are only creations and constructions and not natural qualities of women. For her, these are only artificial rules created to dominate women. That’s why for a patriarchal society:

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 Rs 500, you should never earn more than Rs. 499. That’s the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage. Don’t ever try to reverse the doctor-nurse, executive-secretary, principal-teacher role. It can be traumatic, disastrous. (124)

Based on this issue of dominant and dominated roles of males and females respectively, Premila Paul explores: “*The Dark Holds No Terrors* by Shashi Deshpande is a totally different novel in the sense that it explores the myth of man’s superiority and the myth of woman being a paragon of all virtues. It is based on the problems faced by a career woman, a refreshingly new phenomenon in Indian English fiction” (60).

If we look at the protagonist on the basis of the extract cited above, she has reversed the rule and has earned more than Manohar. Because of this, their marriage could not be a happier one. That’s why she scornfully says: “Women’s magazine will tell you that a marriage should be an equal partnership. That’s nonsense. Rubbish. No partnership can ever be equal. [...] If the scales tilt in your favor, god help you, both of you” (124). If all women are to survive and to be happy in their conjugal relationship, they will have to

surrender their capabilities to the will of their husband. According to R. Mala, Sarita resents and disapproves this position of women because “what she wants is the freedom to think and decide for herself and the liberation from her womanhood. For she finds her ‘womanly self’ trapped and suffocated within her family [...]” (52).

The inferiorizing of females is so much pervasive that even women have internalized this way of life and willingly accept the subservient position. They even impose these rules on their daughters and daughters-in-law. It is not only limited to a particular family alone. In the novel, Sarita’s mother has internalized the gender construction of the society on the basis of which the status of male is held higher than the status of the female. That is why, she shows sexist gender on the treatment of her children. Even in case of other person she has similar assumption. Sarita reports a situation in which a woman had been tied to a peg in the cattle shed for ten years and fed on scraps like a dog. And then after ten years of this life, she had at last died. When the neighbor remarked ‘poor woman’ her mother said, “But how do we know what she had done to be treated that way? May be, she deserved what she got” (79). Sarita found the judgement so hard, so cruel, and so merciless that she had shuddered and hated her mother for it. Premila Paul argues in similar fashion when she says, “Saru detests the merciless judgement of her mother who causally dismisses the topic saying, ‘she perhaps deserved it’. The thrust here is not on man’s cruelty to woman but woman’s cruelty to woman” (70).

Saru does not have any respect to the institution like marriage if it only allows women the limited role models. Such a system only hampers the capabilities of women. Saru remembers an incident in which she had been to a friend’s house where the wife had only the role of a servant. Saru compares her situation as a “nameless waiter in a hotel” (144). She notices the subservient role of the woman and says:

She came in silently, unobtrusively, like a shadow and went out in the same way, her husband’s conversation not interrupted even by a fraction of a

second by her presence. He did not introduce her to us, and so strong was the man's disregard of her presence that we ignored her too [...]. Her face was unchanged, expressionless, as if she had fallen in with her husband's desires and successfully effaced the person that was her. (144)

Paul comments on this incident saying, "Saru has no respect for the abject acceptance religiously practiced by the wives" (70).

The assimilation of patriarchal ideas is what Saru strongly opposes. It only deprives them of leading a meaningful life in society. This is what she sees in her friend Padmakar Rao's wife. This situation is so much meaningful that even the conscious husband himself finds his wife boring because "she can't talk about anything but servants and the children. And prices. I earn enough, but she's perpetually trying to economize. She never has her food until I go home and have mine, she cooks just what I like, and she never calls me by my name" (120). The woman is not educated because of which she has to remain unnoticed into her own home. Such unconscious, unmeaning heroism, born out of the myth of the self-sacrificing martyred woman did not arouse either her pity or her admiration. She often wondered "why didn't [such woman] do something about it earlier" (98)? But they had schooled themselves to silence. Though they are constantly subjected to ill treatment, they never complain. They never tell anyone what is happening to them.

Because of these all complications, discriminations and submissiveness as expected by family, society and its various institutions like marriage, and religion from women, Sarita finds comfort at her father's house where both father and Madhav, for mother already dead, "made no demands on her, nor on each other for that matter" (145). Here, she felt comfort and security from the very pattern of their life. Therefore, we see that Sarita moves from her parents' home to marry a person below her caste and again moves to her parental home because she can not endure any injustices done on the basis of

her sex. She wants freedom and liberation from the traditionally confined roles of female in order to assert her true identity.

Sarita's Sense of Attachment to Patriarchal Society

Sarita, the protagonist of the novel, is obviously aware of the gender problems and their impact on the individuality of women. These, she thinks, are issues generated by the contemporary social convention, therefore, she blames society for all these mistreatments. But she shows attachments to social system and its comforts because of its ascription of certain values and security as well. There are various illustrations on the novel that helps us to know her belief and respect to society in general.

Radical attitude of freedom and autonomy in part of the female character has the result of separation entwined with it. The person who believes in society as a necessary element in human life does not conform to this idea of separation. Even if she has attempted at first, she later feels guilty of her action. Sarita faces the same situation because she is not happy at her present situation and she thinks that is caused by her sense of freedom and autonomy. She finds herself guilty of this situation. Therefore, she is in search of forgiveness because she says: "But there can never be any forgiveness. Never any atonement. My brother died alone because I heedlessly turned my back on him. My mother died alone because I deserted her. My husband is a failure because I destroyed his manhood" (198). She even relates her present guilt with her past and reconstructs the events of the past. Indira Bhatt holds similar opinion when she says: "Though Saru considers Manu at fault for shattering the eternal dream of a woman to find happiness in marriage and though she wants to be free from her terrifying loveless trap, she feels guilty of breaking their marriage. This guilt she feels, always and always in her life" (46).

Institution of marriage is an important social organization to run human civilization in the world. It allows man and woman to come to terms with each other and therefore have mutual understanding. Society has reserved certain advantages to its each of the

members. Therefore, whenever deprived of its benefits, everyone feels stripped of certain rights and enjoyments too. Because of this, Sarita respects this institution. It is through this institution that she had once felt relieved from the constraints imposed on her by her mother and family in general. So, when she found her husband brooding lonely at one evening, she guessed that it was her fault because she could not give any attention to household affairs because of her profession- only mean to assert her economic independence. Therefore, she proposed to leave her work saying “Manu, I want to stop working, I want to give it all up... my practice, the hospital, everthing” (72). Here, we see Saru’s attempt to keep up the notion of marriage into her life. “She tries her best to keep up their married life, by suggesting that she might give up her profession. But Manu likes to live in comfort and without her money that is not possible” (Bhatt 50).

The feeling of isolation from the rest of the world is what one realizes when one defies its norms. This defying of social rules and norms forbids them from enjoying social advantages for which they regret later. At this time, they want to conform to social system. In the novel, Sarita feels isolated from the rest of the world because her actions, to leave her mother by marrying a person from lower caste and to return there by leaving her husband without any consult, are non-conforming acts to social trend. Because of this, her father shows no pity and sympathy to her. Therefore, she regrets:

If mine had been an arranged marriage, if I had left it to them to arrange my life, would he have left me like this? She thought of the girl, the sister of a friend who had come home on account of a disastrous marriage. She remembered the care and sympathy with which the girl had been surrounded, as if she was an invalid, a convalescent. And the girl’s face with its look of passive suffering. There had been only that there, nothing else, neither despair nor shame. For the failure had been theirs too, leaving only the suffering for the girl. (199)

But Sarita seems lacking this advantage as hers was not an arranged marriage. Therefore, she has to be responsible for her present situation. She has both the suffering as well as the guilt. This regret is caused by her action of asserting her feminine self. Because of her action “she feels that she has done injustice to mother, husband, children and everybody else” (Sandhu 87). The freedom fighter against gender biasness had taken great move against social injustices by defying caste system. But she feels, now, much more alienated and isolated from the rest of the society as she finds herself uncompromising to the social attitudes. It is therefore, she does not want to take any decisions lest she may fall into another trap. She may again be ignored by people as well. Therefore, she wants others to think for her. The narrator expresses: “If only someone would tell her what to do, she would do it at once, without a second thought. It was strange that after all these years of having been in full control of her life she now had this great desire to let go. To put herself in another’s hands” (88). She feels again: “Surely he would help her now. Tell her what to do. She imagined him saying... don’t worry, I’ll look after you” (185). This assertion of Sarita tells that she is unable and she waits for someone to come and support her.

Longing to be included in traditional way of life shows the interests of people in social convention. It allows them to realize that there is also harmony and people can be happier in this way of life. It is, therefore, the sense of attachment increases in part of the people who have faith in social mainstream. Sarita has also deep respect to society and thinks that there was prestige associated with traditional way of life. There was harmony as new concepts of freedom and self-assertion never inculcated into women’s mind. They were content with what they had. Similar trends, she feels, are also there in her surrounding but she is deprived of it. She longs for the similar lifestyle as she thinks:

The man went out to work and earn money, the woman stayed at home, looked after it, the man and their children. It was not the perfect pattern, nor the best, but it was there, complete, not gnawed into bits by doubts and

uncertainties. [...] There was perfect harmony that pleased her. When she sat in the backyard in the mornings, she heard sounds of women at their usual tasks. It was infinitely soothing and comforting. (146)

She had expected this would also happen to her with her assertion of female equality. But her decision turned out to be an opposite one which entangled her into this situation of doubts and uncertainties. Therefore, she repents: “Was she an unnatural, unloving mother? She had sworn that she would never fail her children in love and understanding as her own mother had done [...]. But the children had started off a disappointment” (146).

Because of the warmth and comfort attached with social system, Sarita wants to lead a life of traditional wife always submitting herself in order to be in harmonious relationship with her husband and family. There is safety and certainty as well. One does not need to suffer for future happenings as there is always her husband to take control of anything in her life. That is why, Sarita sees her own image as that of a woman on a motorcycle. The woman was on the pillion with her painted lips, fluttering silk sari, shaped eyebrows and short hair covered by the end of her sari. And as she was watching the woman, “there had been a sense of shock, as if she was watching the husk of herself, as if she had been hinged on herself, one part of her the woman on the motorbike, the other standing there on the pavement, watching that woman [...]” (174). And suddenly she wonders, “Can I survive without that part of me” (174)? Through this change in her attitude we see that Sarita is also interested in this image of housewife. Therefore, she thinks that if she can surrender to this image of woman then she will be relieved from this situation.

The feeling of guilt makes people reassess their relationship in the past because of which they had departed from mainstream ideas. The suffering caused by this defiance lets them to know about their faults as well. They realize that even their acts in past have led them to this situation because of their inability to conform to it. Saru finds herself

responsible for Manu's sadism and even scolds the girl who had interviewed her on the issue of 'problems of professional women to assert their individuality'. The question recurs to her mind: "How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but the bread as well" (30)? It is from that day onwards that Manu, wounded at his inferior economic status to that of his wife, started to assert his masculinity on his wife by inflicting pain during the sexual intercourse. Up to this day everything was running on usual. Therefore, Sarita blames the girl: "The bitch. Why did she have to say that? It was that day that it began. Or did it? Damn that bloody bitch anyway..." (31). If Sarita had not allowed the girl to interview on that subject, the situation would have perhaps remained normal. Therefore, "Saru accepts some of the blame for Manu's sadism" (Bhavani 26).

The protagonist is aware of the fact that the conventional women suffer too, but their suffering is sanctified by the norms of Indian culture and particularly by that of a patriarchal culture. She remembered being invited by a friend to a ceremony held in the eighth month of her pregnancy. The mother had done all the prescribed rituals for the pregnant daughter, ending up with the gift of sari and blouse piece given to the girl along with a coconut. Sarita, suddenly at the sight of the two, the mother and the daughter, "had had tears in her eyes. I never had this. So many deprivations, she wondered now... why had that one hurt so much" (51)? She knows that because of her liberating impulse from 'age old confinement' of Indian society, she had been denied it. But she, later on, repents for it as she has lost this chance in her life. Therefore, she longs to be "a tradition-bound woman [who] may sacrifice her happiness for the sake of the well-being of the family as an unit, but at the same time retain her individuality" (Sathupati 14).

She left her home in a fever of excitement to search for a feminine self so as to get away from the domination of her mother because of her sex as Ramamoorthi writes: "The departure of the heroine from the mother is the first step towards autonomy [...]" (41). But Sarita is not pleased with what she did. Later, she is upset with what she did earlier

because that deprived her of the social comforts. She guesses: “Perhaps when [...] his daughter deserted him, he faced that his life ended within him. The bleakness of the thought saddened her” (135). Saru finds her own fault for the suffering of her father.

Her decision to assert her independent identity and autonomous being irrespective of social, familial and other obligations turns out to be a fatal one for she feels as an anomaly. This makes her realize her mistake. Therefore, whenever she remembers her past life which she finds terribly betrayed by this thought of freedom. At this juncture, “She felt a measure of freedom that had eluded her in the other. But freedom, to do what? To be what” (86-87)?

She also laments for the loss of her person as a house-wife submitting herself at her husband’s will and thus finding happiness in her own home. She is grieved for the loss of it as she says: “And yet it was not that loss which filled her with such grief now. It was the other thing ...the thing she knew she had lost forever... the eternal dream of finding happiness through a man. It would never come alive for her again. Too soon, I lost it too soon, she thought. And it was like a silent mourning wail inside her” (112). In an attempt to find happiness she has even adopted conventional way of life: “She had given up eating with them. She preferred to have her meal later, untroubled by the thought of serving others, of having cooked either too much or too little” (151). Here, we find her desire to lead a life of a housewife that will give her pleasure and satisfaction. Therefore, time and again she sees her image in the form of such woman: “I saw myself, the end of my sari tucked into my waist, hair tied into a neat knot, smiling at them all as I served them. And all of them smiled back at me. A mother in an ad, in a movie, dressed in crisply starched, ironed sari. Wife and mother, loving and beloved. A picture of grace, harmony and happiness” (73). Premila Paul, addressing this situation, comments: “The feeling of homelessness is indicative of inner disintegration. Tension between the different parts within one’s self takes away the harmony within and without. At times Saru sees herself as

two separate halves, 'a two-in-one woman' [...]. At other times, it is more than mere dichotomy, it is total disintegration" (73).

Sarita feels the loss of happiness time and again. The point of departure from her parents' home that she had reasoned with is entangling herself. She feels she is like her mother in the eyes of her children. She wonders, "Do we travel, not in straight lines, but in circles? Do we come to the same point again and again" (158)? Because of this unimproved situation she "felt a deadly fear. As if I was isolated from everyone, from the whole world, by what was happening to me; doomed never to participate in it, never experience it myself" (103). She realizes as if "she had been pushed out of the warm hole into which she had retreated, and now stood outside, open to all the winds" (96-97).

Saru behaves like a typical conventional woman. She seems sometimes that she has internalized the way of life of the women of her surrounding. R. Mala has focused on this nature of Saru when she says:

Saru's silence against her sexual predicament only reveals... the psychological nature of the problem and her hesitation to talk it out. She says, 'I could do nothing. I can never do anything. I just endure'. For endurance is still the Indian woman's way and the discussion of sex in public still seems 'indecent', like 'removing your clothes in public'. (54)

Sarita, sometimes, feels that her situation is unbearable. She wants to use any method in order to get rid of it. But still she sticks to the traditional way of life. It is therefore, Premila Paul says, "Though it is out of character with Saru, it is the thought of children that prevents her from seeking a divorce and she is cautious not to let them know of her problem with Manu" (68).

As the conventional way of life grants some sort of satisfaction, Saru is eager to achieve this. She is tired of the struggle that she initiated by defying her mother. Now she wants to attach herself to the comforts granted by conventional society because though

“[...] she had a fanciful idea that somewhere a vengeful ghost signed a sigh of satisfaction she was too tired to care anymore. There was only relief that comes from surrender. Not to pretend anymore, not to struggle- it brought nothing but solace” (179). R. Mala, exploring into this trend, says, “She reflects the inability to reject her cultural/social background totally [...]” (50).

It follows that Sarita is also attracted with the lifestyles of the women of her surrounding. She finds in this type of life some sort of satisfaction and pleasure as well. Whenever she finds herself in this similar pattern of life she is content. But when she remembers her attempts to defy patriarchal mainstream society, she feels a sense of guilt since her action has led her to be deprived of the happiness that women find in patriarchal enclosure. All these arguments that go into her mind recurrently present her as a character who has also respect for the society in which she lives and its norms as well.

Sarita’s Attempt to Create Feminine Space

From the discussion made above we come to know that the protagonist of the novel has both positive and negative attitude to the traditional way of life in Indian patriarchal society. She longs to depart from its system of gender while at the same time she wants to be included within this social system because of the comforts, warmth and security associated with it. She can not endure its system of gender treatment through which her husband exercises his masculine power over her. Therefore, she leaves her husband and children as the ‘tenuous shadow of a marriage whose substance has long since disintegrated’. But this decision of leaving her family in order to assert her individuality causes her to be deprived of the enjoyments of social life. So, she feels guilty of her action. These two polarities in her attitudes create a situation of ambivalence in the novel. But at the end of it, Sarita attempts to come out of this situation with a task of creating feminine space within patriarchal mainstream society. She reassesses her relationship of past and prepares herself to meet Manohar in her father’s house. By

incorporating both of the stances- love and hatred to social system- she is going to lead a respectful life within patriarchal enclosure. S. P. Swain knows this situation very well and thus says, “The feminine self as envisaged by Deshpande seems a fusion of polarities of being- acceptance and rejection; flexibility and rigidity; fantasy and reality; rebellion and reconciliation. All this is blended in Saru, a typical middle class woman [...]. Her education makes her recalcitrant and militant” (38).

In order to live like a respected individual within her family, she takes the challenge of facing Manohar again. She has thought over it for a long time and, at last, decides: “Oh yes, Baba, if Manu comes, tell him to wait. I’ll be back as soon as I can” (202). Swain sees this decision particularly laden with feminist assertion. Considering this situation she says, “This is the expression of the assertion of her individuality, her willingness to confront reality and not to run away from it” (339). Sarita learns to trust her feminine self. We can see, therefore, her journey is a journey from self-alienation to self-identification, from negation to assertion, from diffidence to confidence. When she received the mail which reported that her husband is coming, she trembled at the thought of it. She did not want to meet him because of the fear of the same nocturnal assaults upon her. When her father suggested her not to turn her back on things, she pondered over it again and again and came to this assertion: “All right so I am alone. But so’s everyone else. Human beings... they are going to fail you. But because there is just us, because there’s no one else, we have to go on trying. If we can’t believe in ourselves, we’re sunk” (202). This is her assertion of individuality through speculation into human condition.

Sarita’s decision to face her husband ultimately and her realization of the basic human condition is what most of the critics have taken as an assertion of her attempt to create ‘feminine space’ into patriarchal mainstream society. R. Mala argues in the similar way while she expresses:

She leaves the place of disillusionment and lives a longer life wherein she unconsciously lingers in the past and then swings back to the present. This recuperates in her mental dilemma and leads her to an ultimate realization of herself. She decides to assert herself not only as a woman, wife, or mother, but also as an individual. Deshpande's woman does not resort to suffering stoically. Neither does she find a new radical way out of the problem. Paradoxically, she chooses and rejects both ways- staunch rebellion and meek acceptance. (52)

Extending this theme of orientation towards asserting individuality within patriarchal society, she further elaborates: "In other words, Deshpande means that the heroines will, in future, assert of themselves; they will no longer allow their 'She' to get deceased. By this assertion of the self, Deshpande certainly takes her heroines to the pole of feminism, though she may not have aim at propounding any such ism" (56-57).

The desire to run away from impending situation rather than the desire to confront was her nature at first. Unable to confront her parents, she married Manohar without letting them to know. Even when Manohar started nocturnal attacks upon her by inflicting pain in sexual intercourse, she endured it silently for some time. But when it became almost impossible to tolerate anymore she left him in the pretension of comforting her father but, in fact, "It was not to comfort her father that she had come. It was for herself" (37-38). During this time too, she did not tell him anything about this sadistic intervention at night and the bruises that he made upon her. Therefore, her father suggested her to confront reality and not to run away from it. He said, "Don't turn your back on things again. Turn round and look at them. Meet him [...]. Don't go without meeting your husband. Talk to him. Tell him what's wrong" (197). When she thought out it for a long time, she, at last, underwent a change into the direction her father suggested and became ready to face Manohar because "Sarita can not forget her children or the sick needing her

expert attention [...] [for] in this unpredictable world, even total despair can open up a new spring of elemental self-confidence [...]” (Iyengar 758). This change in her attitude is the assertion of her femininity as well. Her “[...] initial resentment towards society is transformed with a patient acceptance of one’s duties, in fact [...], women return to society to establish stronger interpersonal ties” (Bhavani 22). In her journey “the heroine reassesses her relationships with her family [...] and finally makes her peace with the family” (Bhavani 22-23). We see, thus, when the heroine returns, it is with the determination to be an individual and not a mere role- i.e. image of conventional housewife. The change that she has attempted to bring about in social system by reassessing her relationship in past and also by establishing stronger interpersonal tie, is her desire to create some respectable place within patriarchal society. Her returning to home is not a sign of total submission to it. Rather it is laden with some interests of reformation in the social scenario. It is, therefore, Sarita “finally accepts that there is selfhood in being a wife, a sister, a mother, and a career woman [...]. In fact with new growth [she] becomes the new pillar of her family. When she does this role, her battles with her family and husband are over and she returns to them” (Bhavani 30-31).

Sarita is aware of her pitiable condition. She has been an anomaly in her society. She can not participate in the social convention, neither does she totally reject it. This situation of dilemma is always in her. Moreover, she can no longer remain in this situation as well. It is, therefore, she realizes, at last, that she has made mistake by running away from reality. This nature makes her feel guilty herself. She no longer wants to feel this again. Therefore, she reassesses her relationship and her mistakes too. She is now aware of who she really is:

They came to her then, all those selves she had rejected so resolutely at first, and so passionately embraced later. The guilty sister, the undutiful daughter, the unloving wife... all persons spiked with guilt. Yes she was all

of them, she could not deny that now. She had to accept these selves to become whole again. But she was all of them, they were not all of her. She was all these and so much more. (201)

This realization shows us that she is not only the patient wife submitting everything of her personality but much more than this. She has the ability to reform her position in society by preserving something of her individuality as well. Reflecting on this theme, S. P.

Swain, thus, says:

The new emancipated women of Saru's generation are non-conformists who are discontented with the rhetoric of equality between man and woman. They want to liberate from the shackles of tradition and exercise their rights for the manifestation of their individual capabilities and the realization of their feminine selves through identity-assertion and self-affirmation. Saru epitomizes this struggle for liberation of the self. (39-40)

Eventually knowing her situation that nothing is going to change unless she attempts, for her father is not going to help her to come out of this situation, she determines to take a step ahead. Since nobody is going to suggest her which may be the way out from this entrapping situation she decides to confront reality. At this time she even remembers how unfortunate she had been when she always let other people to decide for herself. The existential realization that "All right, so I'm alone. But so's everyone else" helps her assert her individuality. She, at last, thinks that she is sufficient for herself. She asserts: "My life is my own [...]. It means you are not just a strutting, grimacing puppet, standing futilely on the stage for a brief while between areas of darkness. If I have been a puppet it is because I made myself one" (201). This situation of crisis in Sarita's life is because of her inability to come to terms with society's stereotypical presentation of female. Therefore, her desire to come out of this situation is paralleled with her attempt to create feminine space within social mainstream. Otherwise, she would have left her husband and family as

well. Sarita knows that her life is her own and the time has come when she must think as an individual and not merely as a woman. Unless she forgets the old traditional role-models of sister, daughter, wife and mother, she shall always find herself guilty. She is aware that she is more than her familial roles that define her. Therefore, she thinks that she has to blunder her way through her crisis of identity and continue onwards. Saru finds herself alone but resolutely decides to move onwards and live her own life. The knock at the end opens the new world of fearlessness, confidence and determination when the protagonist asserts, 'the dark holds no terrors'. Commenting upon this confident nature of the heroine that is developed eventually in her, Indira Bhatt says:

Deshpande carefully and cautiously avoids the pitfall of feminist separation for to deny female dependence on male culture is historically inaccurate. An existence without 'relation to society, a life in isolation is no existence. One should give up the conditioned guilts and be free to live one's life fully and in one's own way. Saru, in the final scene, displays courage, her commitment to herself, and an affirmation of life and society. (50)

Sarita had attempted to be redeemed from the sense of guilt. The situation of anomaly- not finding a safe place to be treated as other women- had much worried her. In this case, it seems that she would give up everything that she had aspired to achieve through which she would be treated as an equal individual. But she was not going to surrender completely. It seems that she was mistreated because of her one childish fault- Dhurva went with her to play in a solitude place where later he drowned himself. She, therefore, does not like the punishment for which she is even now suffering from. She asserts: "But am I to be punished all my life for one childish fault? Just one act of obedience ... isn't the punishment disproportionate to the act" (166)?

The desire to follow a middle way is typical characteristic of Sarita. She does not like separation from the society while she rejects some of the provisions of society in its

treatment of two different sexes. Even at time of intense physical urge to have satisfaction through sexual intercourse “she had thought once. I don’t even need him. I can satisfy myself just as well. But no, she had never done that. For her, it had been an experience inextricably linked with him. It was only through his body that she tried to find fulfillment” (147-148). Her attempts to balance these two paths have always been aspects she longed to achieve. One of her friends Smita had totally given up everything in order to please her husband. She even got her name changed. Therefore, Sarita did not like her. But her another friend Nalu, who had remained bachelor because she thought marriage is an instrument to dominate women, Sarita could not confide her problem with. She even separated herself from Nalu and mused: “Yes, we could very well be symbols of three totally different attitudes [...]. Nalu, the spinster, dedicated to her job. Smita, wholly wife, mother and housekeeper. And Saru, who combined so well a career and a family” (106). She had once thought to reveal her problem with Nalu but she did not because “But to her, I would be a woman, my problems a part of women’s problems. But this is mine, Saru’s and has as much to do with what I am, apart from my being a woman. It’s not only I, it’s Manu and I, and how we react against each other” (109-110). Hence, the search for a parallel way between these two diverse attitudes by including qualities from these both is what Sarita always aspired for. Her desire to tread ‘on this middle way ultimately leads her to the solution which will help her to assert individuality within social mainstream.

Commenting on the ending as given by Deshpande, Ramamoorthi says:

Saru who ran away from her husband and children, who refused to meet her husband, is not ready to confront him. This does not mean that she will go back to her husband but it only suggests that she is capable of facing Manu and asserting her own rights and individuality. The casualness in her words, ‘Oh yes, Baba’ and as soon as I can’, asserts her individuality. (48)

Here Ramamoorthi has focused upon Sarita's ultimate decision to confront Manu and tell him everything that went wrong into their marriage, and by thus not totally submitting herself at his will but rather to be treated as a respectable person in her family.

The attempt to create 'feminine space' within patriarchal social mainstream is the only desire that makes the protagonist move from her parents' house to her husband's and again from her husband's house to her parents'. This 'to and fro' movement in part of the protagonist is because of her inability to conform to social role model for her and also because of her inability to be satisfied with the rhetoric of equality between men and women irrespective of society and its different institutions. Remarking the situation Maria Mies, as cited by Prasanna Sree Sathupati, says:

The non-conforming conduct of the women is not the consequence of an eternal necessity out of changed consciousness. They are not satisfied with the rhetoric of equality between men and women, but want to see that the right to an individual life and the right to development of their individual capabilities are realized in their own lives. (16)

Here, Maria Mies seems to suggest that the women are not satisfied with the separatist mode of behavior. Rather it is their 'inflated ego' of asserting their individuality within social mainstream that compels them not to conform to traditional social system.

Sarita is always conscious of discriminating social factor that compels them to be in subordinated position. Because of this, women have always been limited to the mere kitchen and household works. They are always denied public participation as they are treated secondary to men. Sarita dislikes this position of women yet sometimes feels that there is also pleasure in doing such things. Therefore, she suspiciously observes her stay in her father's house. She even does not know why she is continuing to stay there as if her children, her home, her practice, her patients count for nothing. It shows that integration

alone would make her whole again and confrontation of the disintegrating elements alone would make that possible. Escapism is no permanent solution.

Here, the crisis that propels Sarita's to and fro movement in her father's house has its source in the fundamental contradiction of an ostensibly liberated successful professional woman forced to endure secretly the degradation of marital rape from an apparently benign husband. At the root of Sarita's contradictory definitions of being socially liberated while being sexually subjected is the collision of two incompatible narratives, one containing the theme of female autonomy, the other of male mastery. Suffering from these two contradictory forces, Sarita tries to synthesize these two with a sense of asserting her individuality within patriarchal social mainstream so that she can live a respectable life acquiring female equality defying all biasness of genderly discriminated society. We see, therefore, that her fear of losing herself in the dark mysterious universe is dispelled by her understanding that 'the dark holds no terrors' if one can believe in one's self and if one accepts the responsibility for one's life.

Sarita, thus, makes an effort to a major aspect of the feminist project, which is to transform a predominantly androcentric symbolic order, by creating feminine space within traditional society in which she lives. Hence, her journey is a journey from self-alienation to self-identification, from negation to assertion. She learns to trust her feminine self. All the dualities in the mind of protagonist vanish and she attempts to attain self fulfillment and the 'wholeness of being'. Aware of the fact that she can achieve a state of balance i.e., to create feminine space within patriarchal social mainstream, Sarita wants to liberate herself from the shackles of tradition and exercise her right for the manifestation of her individual capabilities and the realization of her feminine self through identification-assertion and self-affirmation.

IV. Conclusion

Sarita's ambivalent nature is primarily concerned with her intention to create a space for her within patriarchal society. In order not to lose her position in the society and also not to live like a caged animal within it, she longs to depart from it and also desires to be included within it. Both her positive and negative attitudes to patriarchal enclosure create a sense of ambivalence in part of her character. She tries to blend both of these positions because of the separation of which she is always in dilemma. But ultimately she takes a middle path to balance these two different attitudes so that her position as well as her individuality in the society will be secure.

Sarita is dissatisfied with inhibiting cultural, natural or sexual roles assigned to her by the patriarchal society. She views herself as the object of cultural and social oppressions and attempts to rebel against them within her living space. But at the same time, she reflects the inability to reject her cultural and social background totally and hence fails to transcend the horizons depicting a separatist revolutionary spirit. She stands at crossroads in order to assert her freedom within social mainstream. This situation of dilemma is resolved when the heroine, with her greater dedication to her profession, hopes to achieve individuation. When the heroine ultimately decides to meet Manohar it is with the determination to be an individual and not a model of wife that she agreed to marry him.

Sarira does not want to let go this situation of dichotomy as it is lest she will have to live in fragmentations. She desperately attempts to keep them together. She integrates the two halves or the different parts within to maintain harmony. Eventually, she realizes that integration alone would make her whole again and confrontation to the disintegrating elements alone would make that possible.

The struggle of the heroine to give shape and content to her individual existence in a sexist society ends in compromise. Her uniqueness as opposed to the imposed social roles ends in integrating within the social norm so as to be a whole person. The realization of the fragmentation of her own self is resolved when the heroine searches for the whole of her identity as the emergence of a woman who is not dependent on anyone outside her. We see that because of her intention to create feminine space within social mainstream, Sarita, in the final scene, displays courage, her commitment to her self, and an affirmation of life and society.

Her ambivalent position no more sustains in her as she at last arrives at self-realization and feels that life is no terror anymore. She has decided to confront Manu. She knows that she will no longer be the object Manu can take his frustrations on. It is at this time that Sarita tries to compromise with the situation and the novel ends with a hope of resettlement. All the conflicts between the imposed and the willed disappear as Sarita appears to be a blend of revolt and submission. The middle class working woman in modern India rebels against the traditions but ultimately tries to compromise with the existing reality with main focus on her individuality. Therefore, Sarita's attempt is an indication that through a renewed relationship it is possible for a woman to live in the world where men also live. By being true to herself, Sarita hopes to attain harmony in relationship with the society.

Sarita departs from social mainstream because of its gendering discourse. She can not conform to this social make-up as her education and reasoning forbids her to submit to the conventional society. She forsakes her parental home and her husband's too time and again. But she suffers from the sense of alienation and isolation as she feels that she has lacked the comforts of society. The conventional way of life occurs in her mind frequently as the perfect pattern of social life. Both of these attitudes govern her continuously as she is always running on in order to avoid any confrontation. Ultimately, she realizes that

escapism is no way out of her situation. This ambivalence in her part can only be resolved if she displays courage to face whatever comes ahead, she realizes. It is at this time that she confronts reality with the assertion that she is not only an appendage but a being. She is an autonomous being, capable of finding her own way. Here, all the dichotomy in part of the protagonist disappears as she realizes that she can create feminine space within patriarchal social system.