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## The Image of Broken Marriages and Families in Shobha De's *Socialite Evenings* and *Starry Nights*

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### **Abstract:**

The institution of marriage and family hold immense significance in Indian society from the beginning. However, in the modern times these institutions have come under strain due to various trends in metropolitan culture such as sexual promiscuity, growing economic independence of women, luxurious life and sexual freedom etc. Shobha De, as a popular writer writes in the backdrop of Bombay metropolitan culture and provides us an authentic portrayal of the glamour world, elite class, its values and changed attitudes towards marriage, marital relationships and sexual behaviour. Her fiction reveals the moral and spiritual breakdown of marriage in modern culture and exposes the hollowness of marital relations resulting in frustration and alienation.

**Keywords: marriage, family, metropolitan culture, sexual promiscuity, woman, relationship, elite class**

Marriage and family as sacred and indissoluble social institutions have existed since time immemorial due to social, cultural and religious values attached to them. In Robert Geib Foster's words, "Marriage, . . . is a social and legal plan by which the relationship of the two sexes is controlled by society in the interest of children as well as of wholesome morals, good health, and mental hygiene. It involves public social sanction as well as systematic social control" (115-16). In the traditional social setup, devotion, self-sacrifice and fidelity were considered as indispensable elements of marital relationship rather than personal happiness or satisfaction. The very basis of man-woman relationship in marriage was considered to be love that brings them together to make a family and home for themselves. Family and home both play significant role in forming a human personality; and symbolize a sense of security, emotional attachments and virtues, which cannot be found elsewhere in the world. In John Ruskin's words, Home is, "The place of peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt and division. . . . a vestal temple, a temple of the hearth watched over by Household Gods" (qtd. in Weeks 29).

However, in the post-industrial society, the institutions of marriage and family have undergone a radical change. Unlike the traditional concept of home as a symbol of security, modern home is no longer able to inculcate values of sacrifice and love. Western concept of nuclear family has given a jolt to the Indian concept of joint family that has ultimately affected the relationship between husband and wife and the socialization of children. In the ancient and medieval India, the submissive attitude of women confirmed the institution of marriage and home as unbreakable units of society in which women's sole aim was to serve her husband and family. However, the increasing economic independence of women in modern India has changed the nature of marriage, family and home.

Literature as a mirror reflects society, cultural changes and their effects upon its social institutions. Shobha De, as a popular writer writes in the backdrop of Bombay reflecting the

metropolitan culture and its prevalent trends that have influenced the society at large. She portrays the world of glamour and the Indian upper middle class in a very realistic manner. She herself being a part of the rich class provides an authentic portrayal of the elite class, its values and their changed attitudes towards marriage, relationships, sexual behaviour and freedom. Her fiction reveals the moral and spiritual breakdown of marriage in modern culture and exposes the hollowness of marital relations resulting in frustration and alienation that constitutes the major focus in her novels *Socialite Evenings (SE)* and *Starry Nights (SN)*. Jyoti Singh also comments:

*Socialite Evenings* portrays the pictures of the contemporary ‘wasteland’, where the institution of marriage – which was meant to answer the needs of the human race – crumbles due to the unbridled sexual relations. The married couples’ relationship is more of a contract, based on materialism than an intimate emotional bonding laced with apt understanding. (166)

She further reflects on the nature of marriage, “The nature of marriage implies commitment to provide succour, love and security to each other in bad as well as good times. One looks for security in marriage – physical, psychological, financial and emotional. Another basic human need is the urge to share intimate thoughts and feelings with someone one can trust. (166)

However, in the modern times marriage and family has come under strain due to metropolitan western life style and the emotional insecurity and weakening of the family inherent in the modern society. In our liberated age, marriage is replete with dissatisfaction, maladjustment, material considerations and hypocrisy. There is no intimacy and warmth in the nuptial bond. Promiscuity is very common which causes alienation in relationships. As a result, marriage appears to be a dying institution.

Marriage is the union of two different minds; it is only love, grace, wisdom and a sense of understanding, tolerance and sacrifice that can make a happy and successful marriage. In Shobha De’s opinion, “How marriages work, and why they fail is essentially about love – or the absence of it. My take is simple: a marriage works if you want it to. Conversely, a marriage fails for pretty much the same reason” (*Spouse XXVIII*). In *Socialite Evenings (SE)* the rich characters of name and fame like Karuna and Anjali represent the empty and fake martial bonds, which are based on selfishness and material considerations rather than love and emotional closeness. Karuna, a prominent Bombay socialite, goes through the nightmare of failed marriage. She finds her husband— just an average Indian husband “unexciting, uninspiring, untutored” who shows a cold attitude towards her physical urges and emotional needs that makes her marriage joyless and loveless (*SE 94*). Her failed marriage renders her dream of a perfect marriage, “A marriage full of laughter and conversation. One in which the two of us were perfectly in tune. Speaking same language, thinking the same thoughts, enjoying the same things” a distant dream. She realizes the futility of loveless marriage which is equivalent to “skin allergy— an irritant” (*SE 99*). Her shattered dream of happy marriage creates a sense of alienation and she concludes, “Marriage is nothing to get excited or worried about. It’s just something to get used to” (*SE 98-98*).

An ideal of perfect marriage demands a great deal of effort to run it smoothly. As De observes, “There is no such thing as ‘perfect marriage or a perfect spouse . . . . Marriage is an idea. A malleable idea. Marriage is what you make of it. Marriage is maddening, . . . There is no formula for a happy marriage. And nobody has all the answers” (*Spouse xi*). However,

Karuna's primary concern in marriage was to seek financial security but she also longs for love and understanding to make a happy marriage. Her failure, despite of her best efforts, to revive her dull married life eventually leads her to the realization of an irrecoverable emotional distance and communication gap between her and her husband that makes them alien to each other. She acknowledges the truth, "my husband and I inhabited different planets" where they are locked up into their own private spaces (SE 99). Her husband always busy in reading "the business pages of The Times of India" rejects her every effort of conversation with him (SE 96).

With the rapid cultural change and the influence of Western ideologies of individualism and liberalization, the traditional orientation of marriage towards the continuation of human race has been replaced by the gratification of personal desires. Today the valued aspects of marriage are the partnership between man and woman, companionship and personal growth rather than devotion and sacrifice. Karuna represents modern woman's expectations and hopes from marriage whereas her husband embraces an attitude of a traditional callous husband who considers wife's position as secondary within marriage and gives precedence to his financial goals over his wife's happiness. "Everything that mattered to . . . [her] was trivialized" (SE 101). Karuna's alienation and marginalized position within marriage express the dilemma and meaningless existence of wives within modern marriage, "We were an exhausted generation of wives with no dreams left . . . We lived through them, a vicarious, precarious existence. We cling to the status quo of being 'shrimati so and so,' and we refused to take risks" (SE 95).

Sudhir Kumar expresses his views on the portrayal of marriage in Shobha De's works, "De wants to convey the message that marriages are a means of the perpetuation of the patriarchal order. A woman's being is annihilated on the altar of marriage. De seems to believe that a marriage is but an infructuous exercise undertaken by two partners to realize each other fully" (117). The economic independence of modern women is another factor that has challenged male partner's superiority in marital relation by bringing in marital discomfort among men who feel uncomfortable with the changed power equation between partners. Anjali, in the novel, sums it up, "Men just feel terribly threatened by self-sufficient women. They prefer girls like me dependent dolls. We make them feel like heroes and saviors" (SE 101). This struggle for power among partners has given jolt to commitment and emotional bondage within marriage that has resulted in the failure of marriage. Commenting upon the current state of marriage institution, De says:

I believe the institution of marriage is under threat. Not just in India, but all over the world: who need it? I am frequently challenged. . . . Why are people turning away from an institution that has survived for centuries? The only social contract that has worked across cultures? Why has the C-word (commitment) disappeared from relationship? What are we afraid of? Why is modern marriage struggling for survival? (*Spouse* xii)

The hypocrisy, trickery and lack of commitment in marital relations have revealed the shallow and shaky ground of modern marriages. Ritu— a spontaneous, shallow, vibrant, flirtatious high society woman in the novel, presents the real nature of marriage i.e. pretence. In her opinion, the success of marriage depends upon the degree of pretence involved in relationship that can be used as a means to get advantage of any sort by wives. She advised Karuna to pretend in front of her husband to make him feel superior if she wants a successful

marriage. She herself takes help of pretence in order to get desired ends, “The trick is to make them feel you’ve done them a favour by marrying them. Once you achieve that, the equation works out”, further she advises, “Be like me – pretend. Call your husband ‘darling’, at least in front of his friends. Pamper him in public. Press his feet sometimes. All this works like *jaadu* . . .” ‘magic’ (SE 129 131). However, pretence can be helpful for a short time to get material advantage but it exposes the hollowness and absurdity of marital relations devoid of emotional attachment.

Material considerations have taken predominance over emotional attachment and physical intimacy in marriage. Financial security has become an indispensable part of marriage rendering the emotional bond between husband and wife inessential. Women of Shobha De treat marriage as a convenient contract completely devoid of an emotional attachment. They use marriage as a gateway to enter the world of riches and glamour. Karuna’s marriage with her rich husband was driven out of her craving for economic security and luxury not of any emotional concern. Nevertheless, the lack of love and understanding in her marriage makes her disillusioned and she regrets her mistake of marrying the wrong person, “My marriage went sour because I’d married the wrong man for wrong reason at the wrong time” (SE 94). Anjali hailing from a middle class Jain family enters the glossy world of fashion and glamour through her husband Abe. After her divorce with Abe, she searches for a new “husband material” – rich enough to provide her luxury and comfortable life, instead of emotional compatibility. She marries homosexual Kumar for his wealth “the Porsche, emeralds, holidays in Biarritz, Shopping along the champs— Elysees, a villa in Ooty, parties every night, unlimited champagne – and the choice to pick my own bed-mate but only discreetly” (SE 195). Their marriage reveals the hypocrisy of relationships in modern society. Kumar pays both of his former wives in the form of alimony to keep the secret of his homosexuality. He promises Anjali the incessant supply of wealth, luxury and freedom to choose any bedmate discreetly for hiding the truth of his sexual relation with the adopted orphan young boy Murthy. His only purpose behind marrying Anjali and former wives is to keep a respectable public front. Marriages like those of Anjali and Kumar can never provide any real happiness. Relationships deprived of honest and open communication, emotional as well as physical intimacy mark marriage as a failure. John F. Cuber comments:

It is one of the consequent hard fact of modern life that many people, therefore, use marriage to attain ends which are in themselves legitimate but are quite independent of either a close man-woman relationship or a vital sex life. For many people sexual behaviour and fulfillment is something subordinate . . . (16)

Apart from mutual understanding and healthy communication of emotions, sex is another basic human need that plays a primary role in the fate of marriage. Consummation of sexual desire in marriage is more than mere a physical gratification; it is an expression of love. The absence of such love can turn marriage into a one-dimensional relationship devoid of values and vitality. Karuna suffers from such marriage in which spouses treat each other mechanically merely as a means for obtaining pleasure; and sex is treated as “nothing more than a vague habit”— an act of “losing calories” (SE 98). Anjali is humiliated by her husband for his gratification. She goes through the sexual act like a corpse, thinking about something else. Her husband instead of providing love and warmth to create sexual harmony between

them, suggests her to take help of artificial stimulators like —hot movies to revitalize her interest in sex. Failure of one partner to fulfill the expectation and hopes of the other leads to frustration and lack of affection in marriage which results in sexual incompatibility and commitment to the spouse.

Sex being the central and essential aspect of marriage, marital fidelity has always been emphasized and valued by the conventional attitude towards marriage. But in the present times, the changing roles and upgraded status of married women have given rise to new values and attitudes that are not supportive of the traditional code of behaviour. This shift in attitude towards marital bond has brought sexual attitudes in conflict with the religious values attached to the traditional marriage. Prevalence of sexual freedom in metropolitan culture has led to marital infidelity that has negatively affected the family relations; and resulted in personal and family disorganization. Talking about the marriage in secular modern society, Leonard Gross remarks:

The secularization of modern society also fosters the seeking of sociosexual happiness, within and without marriage, and makes easier the disruption of marriage in the course of this quest. In fact, some theorists believe that we are in a state of anomie at present, in which the traditional social program of romance-courtship-marriage is gradually being replaced by an extended format which includes cohabitation before marriage and marriage being followed by divorce and remarriage. (Preface)

Pandharinath H. Prabhu underlines the purpose of marriage and family to control sexual anarchy in society. He writes, “Marriage and family are the means used by society to control promiscuous sex and dissipation of man’s energy which could be directed and used in many other useful channels, without at the same time, suppressing sex” (qtd.in Chandra 244). However, the unbridled sexual fantasies and moral decadence in elite class have dissolved the sanctity of marital relations. Mutual fidelity has been replaced by sexual freedom. Marriage of Anjali and Abe typifies the fragmented, fractured and self-serving marital relationship—replete with extra-marital affairs and sexual promiscuity, prevailed in the elite class. Lack of harmony between partners results in lack of satisfaction within marriage leaving husband and wife looking for gratification outside the nuptial bond. Abe is an “experienced rake with a wild reputation” and infamous for open extra-marital affairs (*SE* 6). Anjali is also preoccupied with her sexual encounters to satisfy her insatiable appetite for sex; and has many sex-partners besides her husband, Abe. Ritu, another friend of Karuna and Anjali, in order to escape boredom of married life, establishes extra-marital relationship with Gul for sexual gratification that turns out to be a disastrous relationship. Karuna’s unexciting and meaningless married life also pushes her into ditch of infidelity. Thus, sexual promiscuity and marital infidelity has become a trend in elite culture that creates no sense of guilt. Anjali’s comment on Karuna’s feeling of guilt about her extramarital relationship with Krish expresses the attitude of upper class towards sexual morality, “Your little infidelity whatever it was and with whosoever is so trivial” (*SE* 357). In Seema Suneel’s words, the neo-rich class’s disregard for marital fidelity has reduced the institution of marriage to “the shape of the dead albatross round the neck of modern emancipated self-respecting man” (qtd. in Singh 116).

Appropriate attitude towards sexual life can save many marriages from breaking up by bringing joy and adding quality to man-woman relationship. Mechanical approach towards sex, in metropolitan culture, has devoid it of its deep nurturing values reducing it only to a

means to gratify carnal appetite. Shobha De, commenting on the importance of sex in marriage, says:

Make no mistake about it – sexual compatibility is perhaps the strongest, most enduring bond in any marriage. Most times it gets undervalued, only because the subject of sex itself is so threatening. Couples rarely ‘discuss’ sex – they just have it. I believe it’s important to articulate how you feel about this very delicate, yet powerful area of your life together. If you are not in sync in this zone, chances are the incompatibility will colour several other areas without your even knowing it. (*Spouse* 154-155)

The marriage of Akshay and Malini in *Starry Nights* (SN) is the outcome of sexual maladjustment. There is no trace of any emotional or sexual intimacy between them. Despite being a married couple, they do not share their bedroom and Malini does not like to discuss sex with Akshay: “Malini hated sex. . . . Sex was one area she hated to discuss, particularly with Akshay. She wondered why it was made the focus of everything in life” (SN 71). As a dutiful wife, she has produced two children for him and now sexual duty is over for her. She interprets sex as only a biological need or social obligation rather than a means to physical as well as emotional bonding. Because of her negative attitude towards sex, she is deprived of conjugal bliss and harmony. Both of them perform the sexual act mechanically without preparing ground for physical intimacy. In this way, Malini’s relationship with her husband resembles that of Anjali with Abe in *Socialite Evenings*. She uses sex as a weapon to make her husband sanction some demand and withdraws to punish him.

Malini’s attitude towards her husband is due to his sexual involvement with his co-actresses, particularly Aasha Rani. Akshay, like a true patriarch, exhibits conservative attitude towards marriage and uses double moral standards. Though he himself is known as a womanizer in the film industry but he is very clear about his selection of wife. He declares, “I want a homemaker. Someone who will be a good mother to my children. I don’t want to marry a painted doll; some cheap film girl who will flirt with all my friends. Malini is the right woman for me” (SN 67). Malini represents the traditional wife with all devotion and dedication to her husband and family who sacrifices her singing career for the sake of marriage and family. Like Kumar in *Socialite Evening*, Akshay also marries Malini for a respectable social position in society but he is unable to provide her any real happiness except material comfort. These types of marriages are maintained only to avoid social embarrassment.

Abhijit Mehra, son of a wealthy and powerful businessperson, is another example who is also trapped in an uninspiring marriage. He is married to a lovely girl, Nikita, who is an intellectual barrister. While sharing sexual relationship with Aasha Rani, he reveals the fact that their marriage is only a business deal, “. . . it is an arranged affair. Our families have a business connection. I like her but I’m not in love with her” (SN 161). This fact underscores the predicament of contemporary marriages, which are shaky, groundless and devoid of understanding and compatibility. The façade of love is maintained in parties or other social gatherings to hide the truth. In public, husbands are seen with their wives but in private, they prefer their girl friends. These double moral standards and indifferent attitude of husbands towards marriage creates a sense of hatred in wives against their deceiving husbands who are always looking for sex. Rita, another elite character in the novel, shows the actual picture of husband-wife relation in a modern marriage:

. . . most women hate their husbands— it's a fact. They hate marriage. That's also a fact. But what else can they do? What is the choice? The only way to make a marriage work is through sex-and most women hate that too. But the day a man feels that his woman has lost interest in sex, and therefore in him, the relationship is finished and he starts looking elsewhere. (SN 84)

She reminds us of Ritu in *Socialite Evenings*, when she puts emphasis on pretence in marriage that has become an inseparable part of marriage:

We have to pretend. All wives have to pretend. . . . A wife is acting all the time -- this is the world's best-kept secret. . . . Boost his ego, make him feel like a king even when you really want to spit on him. Everything is decided by the bed. On the bed. If he finds you cold, *bas*, you have lost him. No woman should be foolish enough to be honest with her husband where sex is concerned'. (SN 85)

In Sudhir Kumar words:

Shobha De, through the character of Rita, tries to find a way out for waylaid and betrayed wives like Malini. Rita is a pragmatic wife who pleads for a compromise in the marital relationship. To her, romance in marriage is a figment of imagination as it “finishes the morning after the wedding night”. After that follows a painfully protracted period of “boredom” for women because husbands or men like “variety”. (118)

Sudhir Kumar's comment on the predicament of wives and sexual conduct of men raises question about the conflict between man and woman's understanding of marriage and marital relations. There is a need to reassess the institution of marriage. Does only sex form the basis of marriage? Undoubtedly, sex is important in marriage, but only sex for sex's sake cannot make a marriage. If that were the case, then Aasha Rani would have enjoyed a happy marriage with her insatiable desire for sex. Initially her marriage provided comfort as her husband Jay helped her revive her confidence to face the situations boldly. But gradually her marriage comes under stress and she analyses her own marriage to find it merely a compromise between both of them. Her father tells her about the domination and cruelty of men towards women, which he himself exercised upon Aasha Rani's mother:

Men are cruel. Very cruel. There is no justice in this world. And no equality between men and women. Don't believe that a marriage alters that balance. Sometimes it only makes it worse. Power lies with the purse — remember that. Whoever controls that, controls the relationship. . . .The only difference is that some men can control their true feelings of superiority. These men are called “cultured”. Other men display them openly. They make their wives feel under constant obligation. That is the best way to keep them suppressed. (SN 331)

This statement exposes the institution of marriage as dominated by the patriarchy. However, today's woman is educated, liberated and independent but her subordination in marriage continues. Asha Rani's own experiences with men speak of the exploitation of woman at the hands of man. Akshay, Amar, Abhijit, Kishenbhai, Shethji and Jojo— all these males take advantage of her for their selfish motives leaving her desires and dreams unfulfilled. Commenting upon Shobha De's view of women's desire and needs, Anita Myles says:



. . . De writes of fulfillment and unfulfilment in marriage — both emotional as well as physical not hesitating to admit that women, as any other normal human beings have their desires and needs which when unfulfilled compel them to search for greener pastures. She firmly believes that a woman has been gifted just one life which she must live to the lees. Her view about marriage is very balanced in the sense that she writes of men who fail to understand the psyche of women, more so her emotional needs resulting in marital rift. (87-88)

This incapability of men to understand the emotional needs of women is the root cause of marital failure. De's heroines understand this fact very well. Karuna says, "We had our own secret lives — and by that I do not mean clandestine affairs. But these were our private worlds, inaccessible to the men we had married" (*SE* 99). Malini's indifference to her husband is also due to his lack of understanding her emotional needs and the sacrifices she has made for their marriage. She bitterly remarks:

Sex-maniac. . . . Bastard, obsessed with the bloody 'act'. He was incapable of understanding her sensitive and artistic nature. He mocked her religion, he scoffed at her music, and he loathed her. For what? For giving up career? For docilely agreeing to his every whim and providing him with a home he could be proud of? For sacrificing, yes, sacrificing everything to be Mrs. Arora? (*SN* 85)

On account of various elements responsible for the crumbling of marriage and marital relations, Subhash Chandra sums up the condition of marriage:

The family is crumbling and marriage comes to be re-defined. The new definition of marriage postulates complete sexual freedom, with no notion of marital fidelity. Economic security for wife seems to be the cornerstone of this marriage arrangement which appears more like a contract than a vibrant, living, emotional relationship. Devoid of emotional warmth and entered into for expediency, such marriages often break down, leading to divorce and sundering of the family ties. (244).

The broken families and familial relations are one of the direct consequences of the conflict-ridden marriages. Aasha Rani has suffered the agony of her parents' broken marriage. Her father married her mother illegally, and then, in time of crisis, deserted her. She and her sister Sudha were deprived of emotional and financial security in childhood. Her mother also went through a bad time and had to sell her body for the survival of her children. She pushed Aasha Rani into blue films and then into Bombay film-world, where she is treated as a sexual object. Mimi, daughter of Anjali, is another product of a broken marriage. While Anjali and Abe are busy in their sexual orgies, Mimi is deprived of parental love and finds solace and refuge in drugs.

Among all these marriages, there are Karuna's parents, who have maintained their relationship until old age. They represent traditional Hindu marriage, in which husband and wife support each other morally, emotionally and socially. Their marriage has survived thick and as it is based on not any need but love, mutual understanding and fidelity. Their marriage is shown to be in complete contrast with modern marriages. Nena O'Neill and George O'Neill comment upon the predicament of contemporary marriage:

. . . the central problem in contemporary marriage was relationship. . . . With the breakdown of many external supports for traditional marriage, the pressures on the interpersonal husband and wife relationship became intensified. There was a need for that relationship to provide more fulfillment and benefits both on a personal and interpersonal level. Problems in marriage were manifested by the inability of the majority of individuals to find in the marital relationship both intimacy and opportunity for developing their personal potential. (220).

Though the value of marriage and family in traditional sense has been diminished in our mechanical age and relationships are devoid of faith and fidelity; Shobha De does not rule out the idea of marriage fully. The women in her novels, despite their tension-ridden relationships, do not rule out the possibility of a good relationship. Anjali prefers to stay with her husband despite her distressed relationship with him. When Karuna asks her to get divorce and stay single, she candidly admits, "I can't darling. I need a man" (SE 93). Even after her divorce with Abe, she chooses Kumar as a husband because she was looking for a proper married life.

Karuna after her experience of a passionless marriage involves herself with other males. Her other relationships also fail but it symbolizes her quest for love and relationship. She accepts it, "I know too from this experience that I wasn't up to adultery for adultery's sake and the grand romance I was looking for just seemed not to exist" (SE 305). Ritu, after having suffered at the hands of her lover Gul, returns to her husband who accepts her readily. Shobha De quotes Hindu Samskara, "Marriage, a permanent and stable union. Marriage is not a temporary contract to serve the momentary physical demand or to enjoy good company for some time and then to lapse at the slightest inconvenience. It is a permanent union which stands various vicissitudes in life only to grow stronger and more stable" (*Spouse* 283).

Shobha De also recognizes the importance of shared spiritual values that can provide a strong basis of marriage. Respect for the spiritual beliefs of the partner is essential because "Shared spiritual values definitely contribute towards the state of equilibrium we all crave. I believe that when individuals respect each other in the deepest sense, they respect the cosmos, too. (*Spouse* 271). Anjali is more satisfied after getting married to Kumar because both of them share the same religion. She was suffering from a guilt conscious after marrying Abe, a Muslim, but her marriage with Kumar provides her more stable grounding for shared cultural values. She shares with Karuna, "You know how weird the whole thing was with Abe. . . . the *nikah* and all that. Plus, I was dying of guilt marrying a Muslim. It didn't really feel like a wedding at all. This time, I'm going to have the works, including a Vedic ceremony our traditional Gujarati sari, mehendi, haldi, everything'" (SE 185). Though Kumar does not give her any sexual satisfaction, but he respects her spirituality and takes part in religious ceremonies conducted by her that creates a bond between them.

Aasha Rani in *Starry Nights* has many sexual partners out of wedlock but she also longs for a proper married life that is reflected in her desperate attempts to marry Akshay Kumar whom she loves so passionately. Her desire to enjoy motherhood pushes her to choose Jamie Phillips as her life-partner. Later on, their marriage also crumbles down but she realizes the security which marriage brings with it. Jay is a supportive husband who helps her deal with all difficult situations. After giving birth to a daughter, she expresses her gratefulness to Jay:

Jay, you have been wonderful all these years. In a way, you saved my life . . . I was sick of living. Sick of deception. So many people had betrayed me so many

times. And I too had lost my head, become a loose woman. . . . You helped me to put my life back together again. You showed me that another, better life was possible for a woman like me . . . with you, God gave me the chance to forget my old sins, my old friends, everything. How can I ever repay you for all that? (SN 289)

It is through her married life that Aasha Rani comes to know about the importance of family and joins her parents to look after them. She gives motherly love to Sasha, which was denied to her in her childhood.

There is no established parameter to make a marriage success. Moreover, no marriage is free of conflict; it is bound to have both good and bad times. Success or failure of marriage depends on the degree of understanding and agreement in marriage and degree of expectations and contribution to marriage. For this reason one need to understand human nature and philosophy of human relationships. A successful marriage always needs some kind of adjustment and adaptations; and the husband and wife are responsible for making these adjustments. In the words of Shobha De, "Marriage is memory. If the good memories outnumber the bad ones, it's a fair to declare the marriage a success. Marriage is also about moments. It depends entirely on which ones are cherished. . . . marriage is for those who believe in it, who actively want it, who enjoy it" (*Spouse* xii). Further she talks about the requirements and her own idea of a successful marriage:

Marriage, I always say, requires an enormous amount of investment. Back to my '3T's' theory. Couples need Time, Tolerance and Tenderness to make the relationship work. These days, time has become the single most precious commodity. Most couples don't have enough of it. Most refuse to spare any for the other. Most are so possessive about time, they measure it out, Scrooge-style. As for tolerance and tenderness, God knows they're both in seriously short supply. (*Spouse* 259-60)

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