



**‘MY BELOVED CHARIOTEER’
– SHASHI DESHPANDE**

: UNIT STRUCTURE :

13.0 Objectives

13.1 Introduction

13.2 About the story- *My Beloved Charioteer*

13.3 Shashi Deshpande- Life and Works

13.4 Text of the story

13.5 Summary of the story

13.6 Themes

13.7 Characters

13.8 Let Us Sum Up

13.9 Key Words

13.10 Books Suggested

Answers

13.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you shall learn

- to understand regarding short story- *My Beloved Charioteer*
- to get understating about Plot,
- to get knowledge of theme of the story
- to understand and analyze the story

13.1 INTRODUCTION

A short story is a piece of fiction, naturally can be read in one sitting. It is one of the oldest forms of literature and has existed in the form of mythic tales, folk tales, fairy tales, fables and anecdotes in various ancient communities across the globe. It has evolved from oral traditions of storytelling, and is one of the oldest modes of recitation. Short stories make use of plot, and other components as used in a novel, but typically to a lesser degree and length. A definition of a short story is that one should be able to read it in one sitting, a point most notably made in Edgar Allan Poe’s essay *The Philosophy of Composition*, while Somerset Maugham thought that the short story ‘must have a definite design, which includes a point of departure, a climax and a point of test; in other words, it must have a plot’. In a short story, the reader as a listener or the audience is equally important as writer, speaker or the storyteller. The aim of the writer, was to find the listener’s interest, so that the tale could be successfully completed in order to disseminate the message of the story. Story telling has been an integral part of Indian culture. The collection of mythological legends, folktales, recitation of episodes from epics, which forms an important cultural practice, and other traditional

forms such a kathasagaritsagar, Gaundya's Brihatkatha, the Buddhist's Jataka tales, form a composite whole.

13.2 ABOUT THE STORY- *MY BELOVED CHARIOTEER*

The story is about relationship of grandmother, mother and a granddaughter in various stages of life. It is a story of a mother daughter relationship as well as a women's role as a wife. Mother and daughter relationship is like sisters or sparring partners. They care for each other. *My Beloved Charioteer* depicts the life of mother's nature and behavior not as generosity but as a normal human being with full of emotions as well as frustrations. *My Beloved Charioteer* by Shashi Deshpande is based on the three generations, three women i.e. grandmother, mother and daughter and three different mindsets living together. Grandmother, being the oldest in the house takes care of each and everyone.

13.3 SHASHI DESHPANDE: LIFE AND WORKS

Shashi Deshpande born in 1938, Dharwad, India. She is the second daughter of the renowned dramatist and Sanskrit scholar, Shiranga. At the age of fifteen, she went to Mumbai where she did graduation in Economics. She then moved to Bangalore, where she persuaded a degree in Law. Her writing career only began in 1970. Deshpande began her writing with short stories which later developed into writing novels. Her first collection of short stories is *The Legacy*, published in 1972. She is regarded as one of the most accomplished contemporary Indian women writers in English. Her Eight novels, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *If I Die Today*, (1982) *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983), *Roots and Shadows* (1986), *That Long Silence* (1987), *The Binding Vine* (1993), *A Matter of Time* (1996) and *Small Remedies* (2000). Shashi Deshpande has written four volumes of short stories, *The Legacy* (1978), *The Miracle* (1986), *It was Dark* (1986), and *It was the Nightingale* (1986), and collections of books for children include *A Summer Adventure*, *The Hidden Treasure* and *The Only Witness*.

Whether she writes short stories or novels, Shashi Deshpande writes mainly about everyday of India and a society in which we breathe and a culture to which we belong. Her major concerns emerge from our own environment, our immediate world. She does not simplify India but presents 'India' as it is to her readers. Shashi Deshpande is known for creating and capturing women characters that are contemporary. Deshpande's women protagonists are victims of the prevalent gross gender discrimination, first as daughters and later as wives. They are conscious of the great social inequality and injustice towards them, and struggle against the oppressive and unequal nature of the social norms and rules that limit their capability and existence as a wife. Fettered to their roles in the family, they question the subordinate status ordained to them by society. Her works have drawn great critical attention and acclaim for her sensitive and realistic representation of the Indian middle-class women. Her sincere concern for women and their oppressive is reflected strongly in all her novels and stories.

Shashi Deshpande is an award-winning Indian novelist. In her story '*My Beloved Charioteer*' she tries to demonstrate the harmonies of grandmother, daughter and granddaughter at multitudinous stages of life.

13.4 TEXT OF THE STORY

‘MY BELOVED CHARI-
OTEER’

– SHASHI DESHPANDE

I SMILE AS I hear them at last, the sounds I am waiting for. A rush of footsteps, the slam of the bathroom door and then, bare feet running towards me.

‘You shouldn’t bang doors that way,’ I say reproachfully. ‘You might wake Mummy.’ She sits opposite me, cross-legged, on the low wooden stool, hair tousled, cheeks flushed. ‘Oh, she won’t wake up for hours yet,’ she says cheerfully. ‘Have you had your tea, Aiji?’

This is part of our daily routine. I can never confess to her that I have had a cup an hour earlier. This is her joy, that I wait for her.

‘No, I’ve been waiting for you. Have you brushed your teeth?’

She makes a face. ‘I’ll do it later,’ she says, trying to be brusque and casual. ‘You’ll do no such thing. Go and brush them at once.’ ‘Only today Aiji. From tomorrow, I promise I’ll brush them first,’ she pleads.

‘Nothing doing,’ I try hard to be firm but I can’t fool her. She knows I am on her side. She lowers her voice to a conspiratorial whisper, ‘Mummy won’t know, she’s sleeping.’

Now, of course, she leaves me no choice. I have to insist. She goes reluctantly and is back so fast, I have to ask, ‘Did you really brush? Properly? Show me.’

‘Look.’ I have to smile at the grinning, impish face.

‘Now, tea for me.’ ‘No, tea for me, milk for you.’

Ultimately, as always, we compromise and her tea is a pale brown. I switch off the Primus and without the hissing sound, our voices seem loud and clear. We look at each other guiltily, thinking of the sleeper and try to speak in lower tones. Happiness can mean different things to different people. For me, it is this—the beginning of a new day with this child. We talk of many things; but too soon it is time for her to go to school. Bathed and fresh, she sets off.

When she is gone, silence settles on the house. A silence that will not lift till she returns. I had got used to this silence in the last seven years. It had never seemed terrible to me. It was a friendly silence, filled with the ghosts of so many voices in my life. They came back to keep me company when I was alone—my younger brother, my aunt who loved me when I was a child, my two infant sons who never grew up, and even the child Aarti who seems to have no connection with this thin, bitter woman who now shares the silence with me. Since she came, the friendly ghosts have all gone.

It is late when she wakes. I have had my bath, finished my puja and am halfway through cooking lunch when I hear her stirring. I take down the dal from the fire and put on the tea. By the time tea is ready, she comes into the kitchen. Wordlessly she takes a cup from me, drinks the tea in hungry gulps as if she has been thirsting for hours, then thrusts the cup back at me. I pour out some more. I too say nothing. Earlier I used to ask, ‘Slept well?’

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

And one day, she had put the cup down with a trembling hand and said, 'Slept well? No, I never do that. I haven't slept well since Madhav died. I'll never sleep well again all my life. I have to take something every night so that I can close my eyes for a few hours. Now never ask me again if I slept well.'

Nine months I carried this daughter of mine in my body. I had felt every beat of her heart, every movement of her limbs within me. But—and my doctor had told me this then—my pains and shocks could never penetrate to her, she was insulated against them. Even now, she is protected from my pains, even now; I have no protection against her pains. I suffer with her but, like all my other emotions, it is a futile suffering. For I cannot help her. I can only fumble and blunder and make things worse.

'Why didn't you let me know earlier?' she had asked me angrily when she had come home after her father's death.

'Why didn't you send for me earlier?'

'Don't tell Aarti yet,' he had said. 'I don't want to frighten her, not now, especially.'

Habits of obedience die harder than any others. I had not dared to inform Aarti. And the next day he had another attack and died instantly. Three months later Priti had been born. She never saw her grandfather.

'Who is that, Aaji?' she had asked me once, pointing to his photograph.

'Your grandfather, Priti.' 'My grandfather?'

She had pondered over it. And then asked, 'And what was he of yours?'

What was he of mine? The innocent question had released a flood of feelings within me. 'My husband,' I had said bluntly at last. As I settle down to cooking lunch, I wonder whether today Aarti will like what I'm cooking, whether she will enjoy her food and eat well. I know she will not, but the hope is always in me. Just as I hope that one day she will talk and laugh again. But the day she had laughed, her laughter—loud laughter that shattered the tenuous peace of the house—had frightened me.

'What is it?' I had asked nervously, wondering whether to smile, laugh, to respond in some way to her.

She had looked at me in surprise, as if she hadn't expected to find me there with her, she had hesitated just a moment, then said, 'I always used to think I was very different from you. And look at us now, both of us alike. A pair of widows.'

She didn't mean to be cruel to me, I know that. Nor was I hurt by her words. What pained me was her calling herself a widow. My mother had been widowed when I was a girl and I can only remember her as one, her head shaven, wearing coarse red saris and shorn of all ornaments. While Aarti, after neglecting herself for days, suddenly dresses up, makes up her face and does up her hair. But it is her face that has the arid look of a desert; no smile, no happiness ever blooms there. Life has been cruel to her. It was her father whom she had loved and he died, while I live. It was her husband she had loved even more than the child, and

he died, while Priti is left to her.

‘MY BELOVED CHARI-
OTEER’

Children are more sensitive than we think. They understand so much we think they don't. Otherwise why would Priti have said to me one day, ‘Aiji, can I sleep in your room at night?’ – SHASHI DESHPANDE

I am old and grey and have lost most of what I have loved in life except these two persons; but at her words, my heart had leapt with happiness. Yet, I had restrained my joy and asked her, ‘Why, Priti?’

‘I'd like to. You can tell me stories at night. And there are so many things I suddenly remember at night and want to tell you. And . . .’

‘But Mummy is with you.’

The child's face had fallen. ‘But, Aiji, if I try to talk to her, she says, “Go to sleep, Priti, don't bother me.” And she never sleeps at all, she just reads and smokes. And I don't like that smell.’

The child has a high and clear voice and I had hushed her in sudden fear that she might be overheard. But it's true, she smokes incessantly now. At first, she had tried to hide it from me; but not for long. When I was a child, it had been considered wrong even for a man to smoke in my father's house. But today, I would of my own accord let my daughter smoke if I thought it brought her happiness. It doesn't. She puffs out smoke as if she is emitting bitterness. There is an infinity of bitterness in her. And I cannot help her. I can only try to look after her body. Such a small thing, but even in that I fail. She is thin and brittle. Most of the time, she never dresses up, just goes around in an old gown, her hair confined by a rubber band. Priti, looking at an old photograph, had wistfully said once, ‘My Mummy was so pretty, wasn't she, Aiji?’

The child's pride in her mother had roused in me a rage against Aarti. She seems to me like a child, sulking because she does not have what she wants, wilfully ignoring the things she has. Has anyone promised us happiness for a lifetime, I want to ask her.

‘Why don't you go out?’ I had asked her once.

‘Where?’

I had mumbled something she had not heard. She had gone on, ‘There is nowhere I want to go. Everywhere I see couples. I can't bear to see them. I could murder them when I see them talking and laughing.’

This kind of talk amazes me. I cannot understand her. My niece had once told me of something she had read in an American magazine. Of young children who stab and throttle and rape and gouge out eyes, often for no reason at all. And I had wondered—what kind of parents can they be who give birth to such monsters? Now I know better. The accident of birth can be cruelly deceiving. We fool ourselves that our children are our own, that we know them. But often, they are as alien to us as baby cuckoos born in a crow's nest. And yet we cannot escape the burden of parentage. If my daughter is so empty that she can hate people who are happy, the fault is, to some extent, mine.

These bitter thoughts do not often occupy me. I have my work. The quiet routine

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

of my day is like balm to my soul. Daily chores are not monotonous but soothing. Now that the child is with me, the day is full of meaning. I wait, eager as a child myself, for her to return from school. When she has a holiday, I don't know who is happier, she or I; if it is an unexpected holiday, we are equally full of glee. But when she my daughter and her mother, comes to us, we feel guilty and hide our happiness.

'Do you remember your Papa?' Aarti had asked her one day with a sudden harshness.

'Papa?' There had been a moment's hesitation. Then she had replied, 'Yes, I remember.'

'No, you don't. Don't lie to me.'

The child had stared at her with a frightened face, feeling she had done something wrong, though she didn't know what it was. When Aarti had left us, she had burst into sobs, clinging to me. And I had been full of pity, more for Aarti who could turn happiness into a wrong. But I can say nothing to her. She has never shared anything with me and now she hides her sorrow like a dog its bone. She guards it jealously and will not let me approach. And. I have kept my distance, too. It was only in my imagination that I cuddled her as a child, only in my imagination that I shared her happiness and confidences when she was a girl. And now I assuage her grief in the same way. 'Look,' I tell myself I will say to her, pouring some water into my cupped palms. 'Look,' I will say as the water seeps through, leaving nothing. 'You cannot hold on. You will have to let go.'

But I know I am fooling myself. I have no courage to speak. I am only a foolish, middle-aged woman who has never known how to win anyone's love. Priti's affection—that is a gift from heaven, the ray of sunshine God sends even to the darkest corners.

For Aarti, it was always her father. Even now, she spends the whole afternoon prowling in what was his room. It is seven years since he died, but the room is unchanged. I have kept everything as it was. I dust and sweep it meticulously myself; but strangely, in spite of this, it has a neglected look, like Priti has at times. Priti is well fed and well dressed, she has her tonics and vitamins and all the other things they give children these days. And yet, a neglected child peeps out of her eyes sometimes, filling me with sadness.

Now I can hear Aarti moving in his room. Even after his death, he can give her something I can't. The thought hurts. Hurts? It's like having salt rubbed into a raw wound. Suddenly it is unbearable and I go and open the door of his room. She is sitting on his chair, her feet on the table, smoking and staring at nothing. Her feet are the feet of a young woman, but I see with a sense of shock that her face is that of an old woman. She hears me and turns round, startled, the movement knocking down his photograph which stands on the table. It lies on the floor, face down and when she picks it up we see that the glass has cracked. Long splinters of glass lie on the floor. The photograph seems somehow naked and pathetic. She looks up at me, something showing through the deliberate blank-

ness.

‘I’m sorry, Mother, I’m sorry.’

I stare down at the photograph and say nothing.

‘I’m sorry,’ she repeats. ‘Don’t look like that.’ She passes her hand over the photograph, uncaring of the bits of glass. ‘I’ll get it fixed tomorrow, I promise I’ll do it.’

‘No, don’t!’ My words are so harsh and abrupt that she looks at me in surprise. ‘I don’t care if it’s broken. I don’t want to see it here. I never want to see it again.’

She seems stunned, frightened. ‘What’s wrong with you? What’s happened to you?’

‘Nothing. I’m all right. But I don’t want it. Let it go.’

‘What are you saying?’

‘Let it go, let it go,’ I repeat. We are speaking in sibilant, strangled whispers, as if he is here, as if he can hear us. Can he hear us? Can he hear me?

‘I don’t understand you. Let what go? He is my father.’ She is still crouching on the floor, holding the photograph in her two hands.

‘Yes, your father, but what was he to me? The day he died, I let him go. Like this.’ Now I make the gesture I had imagined—cupping my palms together and then separating them. She stares at my hands in fascination. ‘And there was nothing left. Nothing.’

‘But I—I’m his daughter. And yours. Am I nothing? Am I?’ She is panting, her eyes hot and angry. ‘What are you then?’ I ask her. ‘You are just smoke and a bit of ash, like those cigarettes you smoke. Like my married life.’

Pain lays its talons on her face, her eyes are anguished. But I force myself to go on. What have I to lose? Only the child’s love. And I know this cannot destroy that. On the contrary, I have a feeling that she is with me now, giving me strength for the battle, urging me on. My beloved charioteer.

‘He was your father, but what was he of mine? I lived with him for twenty-five years. I know he didn’t like unstrung beans and hated grit in his rice, I know he liked his tea boiling hot and his bathwater lukewarm. And he hated tears. And so, when your baby brothers died, I wept alone and in secret. I combed my hair before he woke up because he didn’t like to see women with untidy, loosened hair. And I went into the backyard even then because it made him furious to find stray hairs anywhere. And once a year he bought me two saris, always colours I hated; he never asked me what I liked and I never told him. And at night . . .’

She is still crouching, her hair falling about her face. She whimpers like a hurt puppy. ‘Don’t,’ she says, ‘don’t tell me, don’t.’ With each negative, she bangs the photograph she still holds in her hands and the glass splinters again and again. Now he is totally exposed to us, but there is no pity in me. It is not the dead who need our compassion, it is the living; not the dead who crave

‘MY BELOVED CHARI-
OTEER’

– SHASHI DESHPANDE

STUDY OF SHORT
STORY

loyalty, but the living.

‘I don’t want to hear,’ she says.

How innocent she is in spite of her age, her education, her marriage and her child, if knowledge can hurt her. It reminds me of the day she had grown up and I had tried to explain. And she had cried out in the same way, ‘Don’t tell me, don’t!’ This is another kind of growing up, when you see your parents as people. ‘At night,’ I go on relentlessly, ‘I scarcely dared to breathe, I was so terrified of disturbing him. And once, when I asked whether I could sleep in another room—I don’t know how I had the courage—he said nothing. But the next day, his mother, your grandmother, told me bluntly about a wife’s duties. I must always be available, she said. So I slept there, afraid to get up for a glass of water, scared even to cough. When he wanted me, he said, “Come here.” And I went. And when he finished, if I didn’t get out of his bed fast enough, he said, “You can go.” And I got out.’

I know these things should not be said to her, his daughter and mine. But I am like a river in the monsoon, nothing can control me now.

‘And one day, when you were here, you and Madhav, I heard you both talking and laughing in your room. And I stood outside and wondered—what could you be talking about? I felt like I did when I looked at a book as a child before I learned to read. Until then, I had hoped that one day he would say he was pleased with me. That day I knew it would never happen. I would always be outside the room, I would never know what went on inside. And that day I envied you, my own daughter. You hear me, Aarti? I envied you. And when he died I felt like Priti does when school is over and the bell rings. You understand, Aarti? You understand what I’m saying?’

Why am I also crying? We look at each other and she is looking at me as if she has never seen me before. Then, with a sudden movement, she springs up and glares at me. I have made her look at me. But what, my heart shrivels at the thought, if she does not like what she sees? And then, moving backwards from me, her eyes still on my face, she goes out of the room. In a moment I hear her running feet. My legs can no longer support me. I collapse in a chair. As I sit there, my mind a blank, I hear the cry, ‘Ajji, I’m home, where are you?’

I sit up and look about me. ‘Ajji,’ the voice is peremptory. For a moment I can’t speak. Then I call back, loudly, ‘Here, Priti, I’m here.’

My cry rings through the house like hers had done.

13.5 SUMMARY OF THE STORY

‘*My Beloved Charioteer*’ by ShashiDeshpande is based on the three generations, three women i.e. grandmother, mother and daughter. The three different mindsets living together at home of grandmother. Grandmother takes care of each and everyone in the house. The story starts in a cozy early morning, when we can see a grandmother and the close bond that she shares with her granddaughter, Priti. It appears in the first few lines narrates by grandmother that, “I SMILE AS I hear them at last, the sounds I am waiting for. A rush of footsteps, the slam of the bathroom door and then, bare feet running

towards me”. This shows the strong bonding between grandmother and daughter. The story examines the relationship between widow mother and her daughter. Mother named Arti, the daughter of grandmother a depressed woman. She loved two persons the most in her life is that her father and her husband and they both are dead. She is now the most irritated person in the house and she spends her most of the time in looking at the walls of her room. She doesn’t talk to anyone neither to her daughter Priti and nor to her mother. She even scolds Priti for no reason.

‘MY BELOVED CHARI-
OTEER’

– SHASHI DESHPANDE

She is so much entangled with the past and ignored her present. The daughter named Priti, the youngest and the most energetic character in the story. Her father and grandfather both are not present in her life. Her mother doesn’t talk to her. Her caretaker and her best friend in the house is only her grandmother (Aiji). After Priti left for the school, silence settles in the house. The relation between the Arti and Priti is not too good in the story. Arti is depressed, sad, unhappy, and in pain. She doesn’t do any work, which a mother should do for her daughter and for her aged mother. She doesn’t talk to Priti; however she scolds Priti many times to show her anger, outrage and displeasure. Because of her daughter’s nature, grandmother Aiji have to take care of Priti, she acts like her mother. She wakes up her, she dresses her for school, and makes breakfast for her. It is shocking to see that at this age, Aiji does all the work and she even doesn’t complain. The relationship of Arti and Priti is not good whereas the relationship between Aiji and Priti is good. In the story it seems that Aiji insisted Arti to go out of house at park or any other places, but didn’t receive good response from Arti, on the contrary she got amazed after receiving Arti’s response, who mentioned that, “There is nowhere I want to go. Everywhere I see couples. I can’t bear to see them. I could murder them when I see them talking and laughing” this indicates mental condition of Arti.

She keeps on thinking regarding Arti’s happiness, which is clearly visible in the story as she says that, “I wonder whether today Aarti will like what I’m cooking, whether she will enjoy her food and eat well. I know she will not, but the hope is always in me. Just as I hope that one day she will talk and laugh again.” Ironically, Aiji’s husband’s room offers her the opportunity to find her voice, rebel against her daughter and break the silence that threatens to destroy her home and her granddaughter. The photo frame that was broken accidentally by Arti gave a chance to Aiji, and helped her to talk to her and to explain her that what gone is gone. Aiji is also holding the pain of her husband’s death but on the other hand, she is managing and not escaping from her problems and fears. Priti has a daughter and she needs to take care of her. Aiji also says that she does not want to ever see the photograph again as it is no point of seeing things, which gives pain and discomfort. Arti needs to be happy. Hence, through this story Shashi Deshpande elegantly brings out the mother/daughter relationship on different stages and aspects of life.

13.6 THEMES OF THE STORY

Hope- happiness of life:

STUDY OF SHORT STORY

In the story, the old widow is living her lonely life peacefully. But she is unable to make her widow daughter to live happily in the same situation. Arti, a widow daughter of Aaji, is lost in her own grief in such an extent that she neglects the needs of her daughter, Priti. Priti is a ray of hope in her meaningless life. Aaji can't see grief-stricken Arti. She tries her best to bring her back to the happiness. She hopes that Arti will talk and laugh again one day. The mother wants to share the suffering and sorrow of her daughter. Aaji is hurt by calling Arti as a widow. It hurts Aaji that Arti can find her comfort from her dead father and not from her living mother. The incident of breaking the glass on her late father's photograph comes like an opportunity to mother. Arti has loved her father more than her mother. But now mother introduces Arti to her father's latent traits of character. The mother tells Arti that she was always dominated by her husband. At the end mother is happy because she makes her daughter to look at her and to understand her life. She does not bother whether there will be change in attitude of Arti towards her, but she is satisfied that the locked door of the interaction is opened. Arti came to know that her mother is "a victim of gender based oppression and patriarchal socialization." At last, the mother is successful to bring back her daughter to this living world again. Mother feels that daughter is with her now and giving her strength for the battle of life.

Patriarchy:

Presence of patriarchy and dominance is visible in the story. Aaji, the protagonist of the story was always dominated by her husband. Aaji had been manipulated by her husband according to his desires. She had lived with him for twenty-five years and had learnt to know his likes and dislikes, yet he had never troubled himself to know her likes and dislikes. Even when her husband was ill, he did not allow Aaji to share this information to Arti. He said that, "Don't tell Aarti yet," he had said. 'I don't want to frighten her, not now, especially.' And being obedient wife, she had to follow her husband's instruction. She thus feels liberated, free and happy after his death.

Be in Present:

Third theme of the story is to let go in life and accept the present and to be in present. Arti is much unhappy with her present life as she is unable to forget the death of her husband and her father. Due to this, she neglects her present and her responsibilities towards her daughter. Her mother tries to make her understand that 'what gone is gone', and 'let go', the things which has gone, never come back in life again. She has to live with this fact and to remain happy. She has to accept the situation. Rather spending time only at looking wall, she has to come out from this situation.

13.7 CHARACTERS

Aaji:

Aaji is the oldest protagonist of the story, mother of Arti and grandmother of Priti. Aaji is the only character in the story who understands present situation and face it with all the strength and happiness. She was very obedient wife and a good mother. During her entire married life, she did not chance to present her opinion and wish

in front of her husband. Thus, it shows that she was very obedient wife. After her husband's death, she was alone in the house. She tried her best to make Arti happy. Aiji feels happy in the presence of Priti. She says in the story that, "Happiness can mean different things to different people. For me, it is this—the beginning of a new day with this child" indicates her definition of happiness.

'MY BELOVED CHARIOTEER'
— SHASHI DESHPANDE

Arti:

Arti is daughter of Aiji and mother of Priti. She is the unhappy person in the story. She lost most beloved persons of her life, her husband and her father. After Madhav's death, she could not cope up with depression. She remains unhappy all the time and rarely talks to anyone. She does not take care of daughter Priti. When her mother asks anything she does not give proper reply. One's mother asked regarding whether she slept well or not and she replied that, "I never do that. I haven't slept well since Madhav died. I'll never sleep well again all my life. I have to take something every night so that I can close my eyes for a few hours. Now never ask me again if I slept well." shows her mental condition. She spent her entire day in smoking and looking at the wall.

Priti:

Priti is the daughter of Arti and granddaughter of Aiji. She is the only source of happiness to Aiji and happiest person in the family. As a child, she is not aware about any hardships of life and thus remains happy all the day. She shares strong bond of love and friendship with Aiji. She is the only beloved charioteer in the story.

13.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt

- About the story *My Beloved Charioteer*
- Summary of the story, and
- Various themes and characters of the story

13.9 KEY WORDS

Brusque- abrupt or offhand in speech or manner

Conspiratorial- relating to or suggestive of a secret plan made by a group of people to do something unlawful or harmful

Primus- a brand of portable cooking stove that burns vaporized oil

Trembling- quivering, typically as a result of anxiety, excitement, or frailty.

Suffer- experience or be subjected to Obedience- compliance with an order, request, or law or submission to another's authority

Amaze- surprise (someone) greatly; fill with astonishment

Approach- speak to (someone) for the first time about a proposal or request.

Assuage - make (an unpleasant feeling) less intense.

Charioteer - a chariot driver

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: 1

CHOOSE THE CORRECT OPTION FROM GIVEN BELOW.

