

Chapter I

Introduction

Born in the later half of the nineteenth century, fiction has become a powerful form of literary expression and has acquired a prestigious position in the Indian English literature. S. Prasanna Sree, in the book *Woman in The Novels of Shashi Deshpande: A Study*, quotes the words of K.S. Ramamoorthy, who remarks that “it marks the birth of an era which promises a new deal for the Indian women” (11). The pioneers of the Indian English fiction make their appearance in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee has the distinction of writing the first Indian novel in English with his *Rajmohan’s Wife* (1864). The novel deals with the rebellion of a beautiful and passionate woman against the oppression and dominance of her husband. Toru Dutt in her novels *Bianca* (1878), and *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d’ Avers* (1879), deal with the archetypes of Indian womanhood like Sita and Savithri. The thematic concerns of the early women writers lead to the emergence of the Indian woman in the fast changing social milieu. Hence the problems and the predicaments of the Indian women find artistic expressions in Indian English literature.

Women writers like Rajlakshmi Debi in her work *The Hindu Wife* (1876), revolts against the prevailing social conditions of women. A few writers like Rokeby Sakhawat Hossain, who in the work *Sultana’s Dream* (1905), presents a topsy-world in which men are kept behind purdahs and Pandita Ramabai Saraswati comments on the conjugal satisfaction of women in terms of their marriage. Swarna Kumari Ghosal in her works *The Fatal Garland* (1910), *The Unfinished Song* (1913), and *An Indian Love Story* (1910), shows the strength of the women’s writing and raises women to a position of

respect. Cornelia Sorabji through her works *Love and Life Behind the Purdahs* (1910), *Sun-Babies*, *Studies in the Child-Life of India* (1904), *Behind the Twilights* (1908), fights for the cause of women, especially widows and women in purdahs.

The post-Independence India witnesses women writers of greater quality and depth. Their writings project a vision of their own. Venu Chitale, in her novel *In Transit* (1950), portrays the emotional trauma of a traditional middle class brahmin widow. Zeenat Futehally's *Zora* (1955) provides a glimpse of the Muslim life, culture and manners. Shakuntala Shringesh, in her *The Little Black Box* (1955), does a psychological study of her female characters. The works of these women writers serve as an instrument of social reform and to voice their concern for women and sympathize with the sufferings of Indian women.

Women novelists play a crucial and a momentous role in enhancing the quality and quantity of the Indian English Fiction. In the past, the works by the Indian women authors are always undervalued because of some patriarchal assumptions. In those days, women used to write about a woman's perception and experiences within the enclosed domestic arena. Women novelists, while focusing on women's issues, portray how they do not enjoy an equal status with men, how even an educated woman could pursue a career only if she does not neglect her preordained domestic duty. Though a woman is a scientist, doctor, lawyer or an artist, the discharge of her feminine duties must take first priority. Her virtue is more valued than her beauty.

Anees Jung in her book *Unveiling India: A Woman's Journey* states her ideology in the following words:

In the complex pantheon of diversities, the Indian woman remains the point of unity unveiling through each single experience a collective unconscious prized by a society that is locked in mortal combat with the power and weakness of age and time. She remains the still centre, like the centre the potter's wheel, circling to create new forms, unfolding the continuity of a racial life, which in turn has encircled and helped her acquire a quality of concentration. (48)

In the early time of the Indian English Literature, an Indian woman is presented as an embodiment of endurance, understanding and sacrifice, silent sufferer, and as a custodian of Indian culture. They are pictured as victims of the barbarous cruelty of men but the later generation of women novelists make her rise against the male domination and portray her as a free thinking woman claiming her life to be her own. They move away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self-sacrificing women towards conflicting female characters search for identity, no longer characterized and defined simply in terms of their victim status. They are no longer puppets in the hands of man. Hence the image of women in fiction has undergone a change during the last four decades.

Indian women writers explore female subjectivity in order to establish an identity that is not imposed by a patriarchal society. They start to question the prominent old patriarchal domination. In contrast to earlier novels, female characters from the 1980s onwards assert themselves and defy marriage and motherhood. Recent writers depict both the diversity of women and the diversity within each woman, rather than limiting the lives of women to one ideal. They have shown their worth in the field of literature both qualitatively and quantitatively and are showing it even today without any hurdle. Today,

the works of Kamla Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Gita Hariharan, Shoba De, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur and Anita Nair and many more have left an indelible imprint on the readers of Indian fiction in English.

Kamala Markandaya is one of the major first generation Indian women novelists writing in English. She presents women as the centre of concern in her novels. Her novel *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) achieves a world-wide distinction by winning the Asian prize for her literary achievement in 1974. A woman's search for identity is a recurrent theme in her fiction.

The chief protagonists in most of her novels are female characters who are in constant search for meaning and value of life. A few characters exhibit a sense of insecurity due to their traumatic psychic experiences. Rukmani, the protagonist of the novel *Nectar in a Sieve* struggles hard to survive the relentless strokes of nature and society. She stands for the traditional values of life and revolts emphatically against the encroachment of the western industrial values on rural life.

Markandaya's novel *Some Inner Fury* (1957), deals with the woman's psyche. Markandaya proves that their intellect gains superiority over their male characters. Woman is shown responsible, devoted and patriotic. They are mentally strong and qualitative. Her novel, *A Silence of Desire* (1960), focuses on the psychological torments of Sarojini, the heroine, who is God fearing and religious. She undergoes spiritual crisis when her westernized husband asks her to give up faith on the spiritual powers of the Swamy. Her other novels include: *Possession* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Coffer Dams* (1969), *The Nowhere Man* (1973), *Two Virgins* (1974), *The Golden*

Honeycomb (1978), and *Pleasure City* (1982). Thus in her novels Kamala Markandaya presents a variety of female figures and their gradual journey from self-sacrifice to self-realization, from self-denial to self-assertion and from self-negation to self-affirmation.

As a major woman novelist, Ruth Praver Jhabvala too is concerned with the psychological state of mind of Indian women who undergo inexpressible sufferings in their marital life. She mainly deals with distortion of modernity and the liberation of women. Her novels reveal that women, irrespective of the difference in race, religion, culture, and geographical situations, are prone to be emotional, sensitive, and sentimental. Women long for emotional fulfillment and stability.

Jhabvala points out in her novels how agony in the mind of these women results from frustration in love, infidelity, betrayal, divorce and disintegration in their marital life. She mirrors the undesirable features of Indian social life and attributes them as the source of suffering of Indian women. In *Get Ready for Battle* (1962), she deals with the condition of the prostitutes. The protagonist Indu in the novel *The Householder* (1960), defies her husband for the sake of her ideal of individual freedom. The Indian society of mother-in-law versus daughter-in-law confrontation is projected in this novel.

Jhabvala's *A Backward Place* (1965) portrays the various phases experienced by the three western women – Judy, Etta and Clarissa. Judy is the central female European character, married to Bal, an Indian. Judy is a positive and affirmative answer to the doubts and fears about cross-cultural marriage. But she does not follow the Indian rotten tradition and does not surrender her identity; instead she goes to work to prove that she is more capable than her husband to run the household.

Jhabvala uses fiction as a powerful medium for presenting the problems of the women as well as the Indian society and suggests ways and means to solve these problems. In dealing with the condition of women, Jhabvala repels against the prevalent patriarchal attitudes and explores the women's positions in terms of work, class and family. She works for the emancipation of women.

Anita Desai is widely recognized as the pioneer of psychological novels in modern Indian English literature. The prominent feature of her works is her art of portraying the characters. She delves deep into the roots of women's problems, gives fuller treatment to it and concentrates on the plight and problems of urban educated women; examines the psychological aspects of women and presents their reactions.

Her early novels *Cry, The Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965), and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1982) concentrate on the feminine sensibility at war with the hostility and callousness of a male centred universe. Her two novels *Cry, the Peacock* and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* present the traumatic experiences and mental tensions that Maya and Sita undergo. Desai explores the emotional world of neurotic Maya, who is haunted by a premonition of her husband's death on account of her belief in astrological prediction; while in Sita, Desai highlights the theme of repressed childhood neurosis. The themes of marital unhappiness, sorrowful heart and unadjusted marriage-bond cause depression and alienation in the minds of her women.

Anita Desai reflects the inner struggle of such women, their desire to break the shackles and come out of their cocoon existence and assert themselves as human beings. In this struggle they often get alienated from the mainstream of life. Desai aims to examine the natural, social and fanciful bonds that unchain the women's issues. Women

must raise a fiery voice and initiate an inner revolution against the traditional order, system and gender discrimination with a view to achieving human rights.

Nayantara Sahgal is one of the noted Indian English fiction writers today. Her novels portray the contemporary incidents and Indian political realities saturated with objectivity. In all her novels there is a juxtaposition of two worlds: the personal world of man-woman relationship and the impersonal world of politics. Husband-wife alienation resulting from lack of communication, East-West encounter, extra-marital relationship, existentialistic problems and temperamental incompatibility form the major themes in Sahgal's novels. Her fiction focuses on Indian woman's search for sexual freedom and self-realization. As a woman novelist, Sahgal recognizes that her primary obligation is that of advocating the emancipation of women.

Nayantara Sehgal goes deep into the female psyche in her novels. She shows concern for the women who are caught in the dilemma of liberty and individuality or stability and protection of marriage. She describes in her novels how women are exploited even during the modern times both by the individuals and by the society. She tries to portray the sensibility of woman – how a woman looks out at herself and her problems. Sahgal's novels include: *A Time to be Happy* (1957), *This Time of Morning* (1965), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), *The Day in Shadow* (1971), *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977), *Rich Like Us* (1985), *Plans for Departure* (1987), *Mistaken Identity* (1988), *Lesser Breeds* (2003); and her non-fiction mainly includes her two autobiographical books: *Prison and Chocolate Cake* (1954) and *From Fear Set Free* (1962).

Loneliness, suffering and frustration in marriage sometimes cause disintegration and make women rebellious. Most of her couples seem to be happy and contented but they often experience loneliness. In *Storm in Chandigarh*, women characters like Leela, Gauri, Saroj and Mara, do not like to remain confined within the four walls of their house. The fictional situation of the young hearts broken up by compulsions of marriage and call of new love, suggests that marriage is not just sexual relationship; it means companionship on equal terms.

Sahgal's novel, *The Day in Shadow* deals with the struggle of a young, beautiful and a daring Indian woman trapped under the burden of a brutal divorce settlement and the agony and unhappiness she experiences in the hands of cruel and unjust male-dominated society of India. In *A Situation in New Delhi*, Nayantara creates a society that fails to protect women. The women characters commit suicide because men take women as objects of lust to be used at their disposal and have no regard for their feelings, will and self-respect. A society, which produces such men, does not punish them.

Nayantara Sahgal in her novels presents problems that are faced by women and their struggle for self-identity and their emancipation from the traditional bondage of the patriarchal society. She aims at a moral revolution for the betterment of the world and also sees more meaningful relation based on trust and companionship. Her concern is about the emergence of the new women.

Gita Hariharan is another dominant women novelist. In her novels the women protagonists are the representatives of the present-day intellectual women, and she does not confront them with problems like loneliness and alienation. Her first debut novel *The*

Thousand Faces of Night (1992) has created waves in the literary world and won Commonwealth Writer's Prize in 1993.

Gita Hariharan's novels *When Dreams Travel* (1991) and *The Thousand Faces of Night* show how women survive even in the odd situations of their life and examine the survival tactic of women characters. The novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night* forwards the female bond and attempts to create new paradigms for the recreation of woman's identity. The mother-daughter relationship is redefined in this novel. In a patriarchal setup, the mother-daughter relationship is deformed and motherhood has a restricted meaning.

Gita Hariharan's women characters stand as an epitome of the changing image of women moving away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self sacrificing women to self-assured, assertive and ambitious women by forcing the society to be aware of their demands. Her women characters not only question the system, but they are bent upon paving new paths and creating a world for themselves. Her novel thus becomes the quest for the power of female in a male bastion.

Shobha De emerges as one of the most popular and most prolific writers on the scenario of contemporary Indian English fiction. She goes a step ahead of the man-woman relationship in marriages. Women ought to discuss their priorities and prerogatives. De has published seven novels. Her first two novels *Socialite Evenings* (1989) and *Second Thoughts* (1996) deal with themes such as family, marriage, patriarchy, quest for identity, struggle for survival and marginality. The novels *Sultry Days* (1994) and *Snapshots* (1995) present the emancipation of women and project the ultra-modern lifestyle of neo-rich people.

Shobha De's novels are a slice of urban life. In her novels she realistically presents an intimate side of the urban woman's life and also reveals her plight in the present society. It is a fact that a woman is victimized and subjugated by the male community everywhere. In most of her novels, Shobha De focuses on the marginalization of women in the Indian society. She draws attention to women's exploitation, discrimination and commodification. Women are treated with double standards. Subjugation and marginalization are the vital factors in their lives. They are never regarded as autonomous beings.

Karuna, the protagonist of *Socialite Evenings*, is the perfect example of the misery of women in India. She suffers due to the callous and non-responsive attitude of her husband. Her husband treats her as a mere object subjected to his will and as a result there is a complete loss of her identity. Similarly, Anjali, a young socialite, also suffers much because of her incompatible marriage and her husband's oppressive attitude. Here, the novelist presents the picture of subordination and marginalization of Indian women, her attack is not against the individuals, it is against the system that favours men and causes women's subjugation and marginalization.

The novel *Second Thoughts* is a sad tale of Maya, an oppressed wife. She suffers from marital disharmony because her husband Ranjan considers women as mere objects. Though an engineer, Maya is not allowed to take up even a part-time job. Instead, her husband again and again reminds her of tradition. It is due to Ranjan's traditional attitude and feeling of superiority, Maya feels herself trapped in a neglected and meaningless life.

The novel, *Strange Obsession* revolves around lesbian relationship between Meenakshi Iyengar called 'Minx' and Amrita, the model from Delhi. This novel deals

more with how a woman subjugates the other woman than the subjugation of women by men. The female characters in the novel, *Sisters*, Aasha Rani, Rita, Linda, Shonali and others frankly discuss and practice sex. They are bold and rebellious, who protest against their exploitation and strive to assert their identity.

Shobha De's success as a novelist lies in her keen interest of understanding of the psyche of woman. She presents in her novels the just reflection of contemporary scenario and bitter reality of the contemporary situation. She depicts in her novels, the dissatisfied housewives, the sex workers, the marriages and its bliss and pangs, the husbands in the garb of male hegemony and so many characters to prove her agenda. De also cleverly projects the glamorous images of the attractive, apparently independent and highly professional women trying to dominate the power structures.

The other famous and renowned novelist is Arundhati Roy. Her first debut novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) won Britain's premier Booker McConnell Prize in 1997. Roy is the first non-expatriate Indian author and the first Indian woman to receive this prize. She never admits that she is a feminist, but *The God of Small Things* reveals at many places her feminist stance and her protagonist represents feminine sensibility. She takes inside the consciousness of her modern educated middle class women characters to present their plight, fears, dilemmas, contradictions and ambitions.

The novel *The God of Small Things* highlights the position of women folk in India. The novel depicts women as subalterns, some of whom try to confront the existing social inequalities in order to bring about a change. The novel also presents the constant struggle of women against their incessant exploitation, torture and struggle which they

undergo because of the male dominated conservative society. Roy, through the character of Ammu portrays that the female sex is completely neglected in society.

Arundhati Roy in her novel has a sensitive understanding of her female characters. They are not emancipated, though they are affluent and belong to an upper middle class. There is a continuous struggle within their selves to seek out of their confined territories and to interpret their lives with individual freedom. They suffer oppression in the patriarchal world order, but they don't cry or suffer in isolation.

Arundhati Roy tries to open the eyes of Indian community towards the callousness of treating women as objects. Women thus treated are considered soulless beings, sub-human and playthings for men. Roy's women are the seekers longing for freedom and allocate spaces for them.

Manju Kapur is a famous women writer in Indian English fiction. Her four novels include *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006) and *Custody* (2011). Her novels explore the complex terrain of the Indian family and reveals many issues that are deep-rooted within the family the revolt against the age-old traditions, quest for identity, the problems of marriage and lastly the women's struggle for her survival.

The novels of Manju Kapur voice the sentiments of women and their self-introspections. Virmati (*Difficult Daughters*), Astha (*A Married Woman*), Nisha (*Home*) and Nina (*Custody*), all are searching for their grounds interestingly from a wrong threshold. All of them fall in love first, and the search for the self-identity becomes the second thought. Her first novel *Difficult Daughters* deals with the protagonist, Virmati, who rebels against the tradition and also fights for the freedom to live life on her own

terms. She is impelled by the inner need to feel loved as an individual rather than as a responsible daughter. The second novel *A Married Woman* (2002), deals with women's issues in the present context. In the novel, she takes writing as a protest, a way of mapping from the point of a woman's experience. The novel is a sincere confession of a woman protagonist, Astha, about her personality cult in the personal allegory of a bad marriage.

Manju Kapur's female protagonists are mostly educated, aspiring individual caged within the confines of a conservative society. Their education leads them to independent thinking for which their family and society become intolerant of them. They struggle between tradition and modernity. It is their individual struggle with family and society through which they plunge into a dedicated effort to carve an identity for themselves as qualified women with faultless backgrounds. The novelist portrays her protagonists as a woman caught in the conflict between her passions of the flesh and her yearning to be a part of the political and intellectual movements of the day. She presents the changing image of women moving away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self-sacrificing women towards self-assured assertive and ambitious women making society aware of their demands and in this way providing a medium for self-expression. Her women try to build lives for themselves within or outside the conventional family life.

Anita Nair is a famous writer in Indian English fiction. Her novels are passionately woven on the thread of human nature and values with a female-oriented component. She has written five novels. Her novels include *The Better Man* (2000), *Ladies Coupe* (2001), *Malabar Mind* (2002), *Mistress* (2005), and *Lessons in Forgetting* (2010). She places major emphasis on examining women's lives and their psyche within

the context of South Indian family. Her fiction explores the search of the woman to fulfill herself basically as a human being, independent of her various traditional roles as daughter, wife, mother and so on.

Her debut novel *The Better Man* (2000), is a straight forward tale set in a Kerala village. The novel unveils the reality of Indian women, who are still deprived of their rights in love and marriage. Her women characters in the novel assert their individuality and try to liberate themselves from the clutches of man. In the novel, the protagonist, Anjana's marital relation with her husband is marked by loneliness and improper communication. At the end, she realizes that she has to live her life with no symbols of marriage and decides to live as a spinster. She holds strong opinions about patriarchy and decides to become a teacher and discards the perception of wifhood, maternity and marriage as the final goal of a woman's survival. The novel travels from the total silence to strong enunciation at the end.

Anita Nair's characters in *Ladies Coupe* (2001), have their own pain and sorrow but they overcome their entire struggle and have their own life in their society. In the novel, she focuses on man-woman relationship, marriage and divorce, social and cultural, and psychological issues. The novel is set in a railway compartment specially meant for six ladies travelling in the coupe narrate their stories and share their secrets lying deep in their hearts. Here, the female character, Margaret Shanthi is a chemistry teacher, who is married to Ebenezer Paulraj. He is an example of male dominance. He changes her life by restricting her from doing what she wants to do. So she changes herself in an artistic way to win her freedom from her husband. Thus in the novel, Anita Nair deals with the themes like patriarchy and women's empowerment. She presents female's voice

proclaiming the voyage of self-consciousness to the realization of self and ultimately the reaffirmation of female identity against male domination.

Thus Anita Nair in her novels gives the external and the internal identity of all her female characters in a psychological way. Her fictional specialty occurs to be the exploration of the psyche of her women characters of all age groups. She also focuses on the tactics of re-adjustments her female protagonists commence in order to create an identity of their own.

Possessing a rare insight into the entire panorama as women's plight in the present day custom-bound Indian society, women writers reflect in their novels the subtle factors and the besetting influences contributing to the position of womanhood in the emerging society. Shashi Deshpande, who occupies a unique position among contemporary Indian novelists in English, analyses the reforming phenomenon of the Indian woman – from the submissive and subservient status to the liberated and creative phase intent on shaping her own future. Her women protagonists are drawn from middle class are sensitive, intelligent, educated and career oriented. They revolt against social taboos, the cramped, wrinkled traditions and the values of their ancestors, carelessly questioning the very concepts of love, marriage and sex, and an urge to redefine human relationship and behavior. Her heroines move from self-abnegation to self-realization. Their experiences compel them to struggle for their self-emancipation. Her novels reflect on the problems and concerns of the middle class Indian women.

Deshpande's publication includes several novels, many collected short stories and four books for children. Her novels are *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *If I Die Today* (1982), *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983), *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *That Long*

Silence (1988), *The Binding Vine* (1993), *A matter of Time* (1996), *Small Remedies* (2000), *Moving On* (2004), and *In the Country of Deceit* (2008). Her novel *That Long Silence* fetches her, the Nanjangud Thirumalamba Award and Sahitaya Akademi Award in 1991. The Thirumathi Rangammal prize is received by her for the best Indian novel *Roots and Shadows* of 1982-83.

Deshpande's short story collections are *The Legacy and Other Stories* (1978), *It Was Dark and Other Stories* (1986), *The Miracle and Other Stories* (1986), *It Was the Nightingale and Other Stories* (1986), and *The Intrusion and Other Stories* (1993). Her books include *A Summer Adventure* (1978), *The Only Witness* (1980), *The Hidden Treasure* (1980), and *The Narayanpur Incident* (1982). *Drishte* (1990), a screenplay is another work by Deshpande.

The theme in Shashi Deshpande's novels is human relationships that exist between father and daughter, husband and wife and between mother and daughter. The stories explore the search of a woman to remain as a human being in spite of playing her role as a daughter, wife and mother. In all these relationships the woman occupies the central stage. Her novels reflect the lives of suffocated women in search of refuge from suffering. In the process of the search for a solution to their problems they shift from personal pains to the sufferings of the other women around.

Shashi Deshpande's novels like, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *Roots and Shadows*, *That Long Silence*, *The Binding Vine*, *A matter of Time*, *Small Remedies*, *Moving On*, and *In the Country of Deceit* deal with women issues. In these novels she starts to discuss and question on the gender-role expectations. Her female characters evince vigour and

courage to question the oppressive role of society, religion and culture. Shashi Deshpande through her writings suggests measure for amelioration.

The Dark Holds No Terrors is a story of introspection the protagonist Saru, the daughter with whom the mother never reconciles, especially after the death of her younger brother. She defies her mother, goes to a city, becomes a doctor and marries a man whom she chooses herself. The novelist writes on the conflicts that Saru faces as a doctor and as a wife. Sarita is renamed as Gitanjali after marriage, which symbolically means that she has to face the pain of life, infected violently by the sickness of patriarchy. During the day time she is popular but in the night she is a trapped animal in the hands of her husband, Manohar. She becomes a hapless victim of her senseless choice of love marriage. Sarita goes back to her parental house so as to escape from her sadist husband and loveless marriage. The pain and shames she undergoes is a deep feeling anguish, kills the creativity and imagination and transforms Saru into something different. She begins to reinforce her indispensability and reconciles herself to face the hard reality of life.

In *Roots and Shadows*, Indu is a journalist. On the one hand she finds herself caught in dilemma of preference between family and profession, between patriarchy and traditions and on the other independence and self expression. She tries to find herself from oppression and tries to attain individuality. She leaves home yearning for freedom but finds that she has lost the same after her marriage with Jayant. She gains strength to make herself happy.

Deshpande's *That Long Silence* is an expression of silence of the modern, educated Indian middle class housewife, Jaya. The novelist realistically depicts the inner conflicts of the protagonist, Jaya, which triggers off a process of retrospection and

introspection. Jaya lives with her husband Mohan and two children Rahul and Rati. But there is no bridge of understanding between the wife and the husband. The story entirely revolves around Jaya's married life and her role as a dutiful wife. In the novel Jaya is torn between love and hate, like and dislike for her own husband and life situations. She is an embodiment of tolerance, suffering and courage and plays the role of a traditional woman. However the courage deserts her, she faces great emotional turmoil. She is forced to adopt the new role of becoming modern, egoistical, self assertive and a rebellious woman. Mohan under the pressure of his suspension and social complications arising from it, humiliation and the need to hide facts from family and friends, accuses Jaya of her changed behaviours in the days of adversity. The novel questions the patriarchal constructions and the systematic devolution of women selfhood.

The Binding Vine deals with the personal tragedy of the protagonist Urmi. Her vision towards life is quite different from other women of the society. The problem with her is that she brims with her confidence as she is financially independent and well settled in life. Due to this economic stability, she develops superego in herself, which makes her reluctant to submit before her husband. After marriage she feels that the bond between her and her husband is not that of love but there is lot of emotional support and understanding. Urmi is the most rebellious of Deshpande's female protagonist. Being aware of the injustices and the inequalities prevailing in the society against woman, she makes an effort to see things right.

In *A Matter of Time*, Shashi Deshpande presents a world of women in different roles – mothers, daughters and wives. It is an exploration of the silent suffering of the three generations of women represented by Manorama, Kalyani, Sumi and her daughters.

These women act and react to different situations in their life. Kalyani is presented as a weak and a feeble character, and is a representative of the self-sacrificing Indian women of the older generation who suffer silently. Sumi too appears to be an epitome of silent suffering and passive resistance. She shows boundless patience and accepts her tragedy but at the same time remains calm and cool.

Shashi Deshpande's novels expose the patriarchal traditions in the society and the place of women in it. She presents a deep insight into the female psyche. A matter of time is an exploration of Kalyani, Sumi and her daughters. The most striking example of silent suffering is Kalyani, who spends nearly forty years in total silence with her husband, Shripati. She is indeed pitiable but she exhibits deep endurance and strength. Through the portrayal of these silent, brooding, suffering women, Shashi Deshpande calls for a change in the norms and values of society.

Deshpande's *Small Remedies* mirrors the social transitions occurring in Indian society. The novel is about Savitribai Indorekar, the aging doyenne of Hindustani music, who avoids marriage and a home to pursue her genius. Both Savitribai and Leela represent modern women with vaulting ambitions and courage. Music and politics are the two fields through, which Savitribai and Leela desire to establish themselves. These women are devoid of feminine weaknesses and they aspire to masculine power and respect. They are aware of their oppression in society, as women and they want to claim equality in career. Though talented, gifted, courageous these women are side lined as they are women. The party people subdue Leela though she works for many years for the party. They lead the most unconventional of lives, and undergo great mental trauma due to the opposition by a society that practices double standards like, one for men and the

other for women. It is not easy for a woman to reach the zenith of success breaking the strong barriers constructed or prevailed from so many centuries. The discrimination of women is global.

Moving On is about Deshpande's protagonist Manjari who tries to achieve her real self through her struggles. She is an educated widow, who lives in close association with society, brushing aside all its narrow conventions. Her marriage life with Shyam begins on a dismal note. Married at the age of eighteen and widowed at twenty one, Manjari becomes a burden to herself but she becomes bold and challenging. She resists the patriarchal ideology and tries to live on her own terms. She turns into a new woman redefining freedom and also relationship.

In the Country of Deceit, Deshpande brings back to life Devyani, a young spinster, a character from one of her earlier novels *Come Up and Be Dead*. The novel narrates the doomed love-affair between an unmarried woman, Devayani and a married police officer, Ashok Chinappa. Shashi Deshpande explores man-woman relationship from a fresh perspective—an illicit love-affair between a married man and an unmarried woman. She continues to probe into women's experiences, constraints and problems. Devayani gives all her youthful years to take care of her invalid mother, Pushpa, and after her death there is emptiness in her life. Pushpa suffers from epilepsy. Pushpa bears the burden of her husband's unhappiness. Her husband's life is a series of disappointments. Pushpa's last days are full of pain and sufferings. She recovers from the loss of her mother and starts life anew, symbolised by the demolition of her ancestral home and the building of a modern house. With the modern house, Devyani sheds her conservative outlook on life and her inhibitions.

Devayani knows that her father's death is not an accident but a suicide. Having witnessed her parent's anguish, she does not want to settle into a marriage of compromise. She rejects the marriage proposal sent to her by Sindhu, who warns her that the Indian society permits marriage as the only option to a woman's bodily demands. Devayani starts to wonder why her mother names her after a 'stupid' legendary queen, who lived a loveless life. She has a foreboding that like the queen, she too, would be unable to find true love.

The stories show the anguish and the conflict of women caught between patriarchy and tradition on the one hand and their self-expression, individuality and independence on the other hand and the transition they undergo. The protagonists change a lot when they marry, losing part of their identity and self-confidence. This happens in the case of all her protagonists like Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Indu in *Roots and Shadows*, Jaya in *That Long Silence*, Urmi in *The Binding Vine*, Sumi in *A Matter of Time*, and Savitribai and Leela in *Small Remedies*. But all of them end up becoming complete human beings. In other words, her main characters have an incredible inner strength. None of them gives up and none of them are failures at the end. These characters are particularly impressing because they contradict the popular saying that women are weak.

This thesis is an attempt to study Shashi Deshpande's women protagonists as portrayed by her in her novels with a view to understanding and appreciating their trials and tribulations under the impact of the conflicting influence of tradition and modernity and to analyse their response to the emerging situations in life so as to fit themselves in the contemporary society. The aim of this thesis is to point out the fact that education,

status, economic independence or similar signs of empowerment cannot make a woman entirely free of suppression. This thesis stresses the need for women to break free from the shackles of their traditional position and see their own need for self- fulfillment as more important than the duty of sacrificing themselves for their husbands and children. The Three select novels of Shashi Deshpande for this study are *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *Roots and Shadows* and *That Long Silence*. Her women protagonists Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Indu in *Roots and Shadows* and Jaya in *That Long Silence*, find themselves trapped in the roles assigned to them by the society, and their attempt to assert their individuality. Sensitive to the changing times and situations, they revolt against the traditions in their search for freedom.

In Deshpande's novels, marriage is shown to be the institution enslaving women to a lifetime of male domination. Marriage plays an important role in shaping the life of a human being but it turns out to be a vanishing search for communication because of mutual infidelity. The lack of sympathy and understanding in man-woman relationship leads to the sufferings of women in the marital bond and their self realization at last. The Novels *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *Roots and Shadows* and *That Long Silence* bring out Shashi Deshpande as a writer with female concerns seeking independent existence of women. The novelist makes a bold attempt to leave the traditional ideas and going beyond the norms. Indu and Jaya leave the idea of living and loving one particular man. Her women, who are educated, modern and empowered, question man's lack of concern about their likes and dislikes.

Chapter I of the thesis entitled "Introduction" elicits the aspects and qualities of Indian women writers and their significance, the life of Shashi Deshpande, her major

themes in her works and the features of female characteristics in her novels. In the novels, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *Roots and Shadows* and *That Long Silence*, the author portrays the women issues. She also gives a vivid picture of how the modern educated women have a role to play in the lives of Indian society. It is also about the individual's self, search for identity, and struggles of Indian modern women who are caught in the dilemma of Indian tradition bound society and modernized society.

Chapter II entitled "The New Woman" elicits the female protagonist in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita, who undergoes great humiliation and neglect as a child and after marriage as a wife too. After her marriage, she gains a greater social status than her husband, Manohar. So she is mentally harassed by her husband. The abuses, which she faces, make her to walk out of the traditional marriage life. To her escape is always a mode of resolving the tangled knots, and comes to realize that marriage is no guarantee for happiness. She realizes that the permanent solution has to come from within and hence gains courage to confront reality.

Chapter III entitled "From Subjugation to Emancipation" is about the female protagonist in *Roots and Shadows*, Indu, who undergoes a great mental trauma in her married life due to her husband, Jayant's double standards. He is educated and liberal, but does not tolerate any deviation on Indu's part from the traditional role of a wife. Jayant abandons her hopes for empathy and integrity. She experiences emptiness, nothingness and barrenness in her life. She comes out of her emotional upheaval, and realizes that she is responsible for the marital disharmony in their lives. Indu discovers her real self through her inner and instinctive potentiality.

Chapter IV entitled “Suffocation and Resurrection of the individual’s Self” is about the female protagonist in *That Long Silence*, Jaya, who despite having played the role of a wife and mother to perfection finds herself lonely and estranged. Jaya’s power of self-determination is severely corroded by the interiorization of patriarchal role expectations. The assumption of the masculine right to control is seen in Mohan’s attitude to Jaya’s writing career. It is he who sets the parameters for the kind of writing his male ego and the norms of male dominated society might permit her to indulge in. She trades her self-respect as a writer, sacrifices her talents as a serious writer and confines herself to the weekly Seeta’s column, which measures up to Mohan’s idea of what is socially permissible writing for a wife. But in reality, his wife’s writing is merely an extension of his own status. Further he is unable to recognize her identity as distinct from his own; his fragile male ego has been unable to accept her being rewarded for her story. The insidious inducement of the security of marriage, which can be shaken by attempts at self-assertion, leads Jaya to a painful decision.

Chapter V entitled “Conclusion” sums up the salient features of Shashi Deshpande’s novels, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *Roots and Shadows* and *That Long Silence*, supporting the stance foregrounded by this thesis. In these three novels, the sufferings of women before and after marriage are clearly portrayed. Shashi Deshpande beautifully represents how the women characters reveal trauma, insecurity and agency that lie beneath the gloss and glitter of modern life. The women in her novels however are liberated, educated, assertive and confident and they do not totally move out of the clutches of their married life.

The position of a woman is unenviable as she stands on the threshold of social change intensely aware of her exploitation by man, she attempts to voice her bitter feelings of protest, but in doing so, she has to reckon with the prospect of social ostracism for questioning the sanctity of time honoured and time-tested traditions. Shashi Deshpande is successful in creating strong women protagonists who refuse to get crushed under the weight of their personal tragedies, and face life with great courage and strength. Women protagonists succeed in achieving self-identity and independence and choose their partners in life to live with in pursuance of their felt need to lead a family life. It is the hallmark of Deshpande's characters that whatever happens in their lives, her protagonists do not lose hope, but only learn to survive.