Introduction

In this thesis, I intend to examine three novels of Jane Austen — *Pride and Prejudice, Emma,* and *Mansfield Park,* and four novels of Shashi Deshpande — *The Dark Holds No Terrors, That Long Silence, A Matter of Time,* and *Roots and Shadows.* I intend to study these novels from a sociological perspective. There is something in the works of Jane Austen and Shashi Deshpande which is sociologically powerful and uniquely interesting. There is their brilliance, expressed in almost every novel, in their exposure of the social hierarchy of their time. I am interested in making sense of these social judgments and the sensibilities of social domination in which Austen and Deshpande lived. So this can only be done by examining their novels, elaborating as fully as possible the key elements of social and economic life so as to bring to light the nature of Austen’s and Deshpande’s understandings on their own terms. In their novels, we spend a lot of time in the world of individual consciousness, but the social consciousness of the era is everywhere implied and negotiated.

Their novels do not float above the society in which they are written, but, rather, are only to be made intelligible through its analysis. These novels show the understanding of the roles of women related to love, money and marriage in a social context. These novels are subjected to sociological scrutiny by isolating the nexus between the
respective stories and the world that they depict. Thus in this thesis, an effort is made to study these novels with the framework of sociological perspective.

It is interesting to unveil the images of woman in Austen’s time. Her novels show her understanding of the roles of women in a social context. Within a social and cultural context where marriage is assumed to be of great importance, Austen uses the number of marriages to expose societal values of the age and to explore the nature of the ideal marriage. The society judges women by their wealth, good connections and marriage status in Austen’s novels. The characterizations of some female characters show the nature of women from a social perspective of the 18th and 19th century.

I intend to show how women in the works of Jane Austen and Shashi Deshpande define themselves through marriage. Some women search for independence and some accept their lives as it is. We shall see how successful they both have been in illuminating the conditions of women who are caught in a net of conditions and relationships that are partly created by them and partly created for them.

The aim of this study is to elaborate the extent to which these two novelists have been showing what women want from their married lives, and whether a woman can live life on her own or not, and what the women character’s reaction is toward money, love and caste in these novels. Some women writers like Jane Austen and Shashi Deshpande have been looking into the truth and giving us harrowing images of women and marriage.
I have chosen the novels written by Jane Austen, because they are a very good example of how women took advantage of marriage. The 18th century is a very significant period in order to analyse how the society at that time dealt with love and marriage. Austen's novels are a good source to discern the eighteenth and nineteenth century status of women related to love, marriage, money and family.

I have decided to include these novels because I see here the different opinions women have about love, money and marriage at that time. Almost all major characters get married for love, as opposed to some minor characters who only care for money and they follow a blind impulse to marry. We can find marriages that are not based on love at all. Here we find some women that see marriage as a business, where they can secure a social status, economic stability and companionship. The selection of Jane Austen's novels makes us realize that true love is able to overcome many difficulties to reach the real love in the end.

For women writers in the early modern Britain, women were chaste, silent and submissive to patriarchal authority. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the period from Aphra Behn (1640–1689) to Jane Austen (1775–1817), novels presented a very limited view of the society in which they were written. Women writers refer to the ‘feminization’ of the new literary form. The novel seems to lose its appeal until the arrival of Jane Austen. In this time, female authors seem to correlate highly with romance. As Mary Eagleton points out,
All the major female characters of the texts have an extremely marginal and unstable class position, and all display an obvious discrepancy between their class position and their alleged rightful status; their status is bourgeois, but most of them are without financial independence. Comparing these texts with those of Jane Austen, the lack of determinacy of class background is striking.¹

In Austen’s time, women were not allowed to think freely and were not recognized as individuals. Austen once said, “I think I may boast myself to be, with all possible vanity, the most unlearned and uninformed female who ever dared to be an authoress.”² According to Ellen Moers, Jane Austen and Wordsworth and Coleridge were almost the same age and from a similar social milieu, but Austen stayed at home, visited a brother’s family, wrote letters to family, and read the women writers of her day. Coleridge and Wordsworth were Cambridge men and traveled a lot.

Jane Austen wrote about what she knew: women and the conditions in which they lived and made absolutely no reference in her novels to the historical events of the literary movement. Austen was able to show the standards of eighteenth and nineteenth century society, which impose some order and control on a situation that in fact gave scope for great suffering and disastrous marriages, a situation in which women had no status except as a daughter and a wife, and where, if she were deprived of her belief that marriage was both a worthy ambition and her salvation, she would be deprived of life.³

Changes in the socio-economic conditions of modern life have led to the participation of a large number of women in various activities. There are some changes in the
images of women reflected in the Indo-English Literature. As Judith Butler says
“writing is a rich location for exploring the political meanings of gender.” When a
protagonist changes in the course of a novel and becomes a different person by the
end, “some reconfiguration of gender always plays a part.” The image of women in
Indian novels has undergone a change in the last three decades. Throughout this
period, women writers have moved away from traditional enduring, self sacrificing
women towards conflicted female characters searching for identity.

Indian society is a male-oriented society. It is still governed by the traditional value
system, wherein women are assigned the roles of wife and mother. According to the
Indian tradition, a woman must defer to her husband in every possible respect. She
must never enquire about money. She is not expected to participate in the larger affairs
of the society. But “what happens when the old customs lose their power and the
woman no longer believes her life should be determined in this narrow fashion?” I
intend to elaborate to what extent this prospect is underlying the theme of
Deshpande’s novels.

I have included Shashi Deshpande's novels, in which the writer tries to show the
oppression of women. The heroines here rebelled against their oppressors who are
their husbands, their parents, etc. We are presented women's perspective about
marriage from a negative point of view. The other issue in this thesis that will be
discussed is about the term ‘silence’. It will show how the most common reaction of
women to violence is ‘silence’. Woman is often marginalized, repressed or silenced in
literary works. “Writing women writers, in subverting male-dominated form, can
better express what women are and what women want.” Most of the work on women also suggests that silence is a problem for women, that they are “intimidated into silence and stifled by silence.” Heroines are free to speak but find it difficult to do so. Women often complain that what they do say is “unheard or misheard or undervalued.” But many men also insist that they are often silenced too. Like the oppressed woman the man is silenced. Trinh T. Minh-ha writes, “Silence as a refusal to partake in the story does sometimes provide us with a means to gain a hearing. It is a voice, a mode of uttering, and a response in its own right.”

In Deshpande’s novel, the ideal Indian woman is calm, patient, subjugated, one who knows how to accept things gracefully. The theme of acceptance runs through many women novelists. We are presented with portraits of women being neglected by their husbands and women returning to their parents when their husbands desert them. They accept their subordinate status. Like Maya in Shobha De’s novel, Second Thoughts, Deshpande’s characters have to adjust in their married life. They have to return to their monotonous married life. They have to adjust themselves silently in the world of sadness and loneliness.

The individuality of women is another issue which I touch on. Women are struggling hard for their individuality despite the various obstacles put in their path by men. Number of works in the post-modern period illustrates how women are exploited in various ways. In this connection, the contribution of Indian women writers is worth
noticing. They hope that women will be taken equal opportunities in social, political, cultural and financial matters.

Most of the heroines are in search of their true identity. “A self-aware woman is merging, a woman more conscious and more willing to interrogate herself.”10 Almost all Deshpande’s novels deal with woman’s attempt to assert her individuality and realize her freedom. G. S. Amur remarks

Women’s struggle, in the context of contemporary Indian society, to find and preserve her identity as wife, mother and, most important of all, as human being is Shashi Deshpande’s major concern as a creative writer, and this appears in all her important stories.11

Women writers focus on the dilemmas of their women protagonists caught in an identity crisis, and their search for freedom. The focal point in the novels is the suppressed desires of a woman and her need to live life on her terms. These novels capture the existential dilemmas of their women characters. For example Anita Desai’s woman is concerned with the dilemma of a person who questions the very relevance of her existence. “There is a glimmer of hope, which brings clear light of the day that will help dispel the darkness.”12 Shashi Deshpande has also portrayed the middle-class educated women and their dilemma, their efforts to understand themselves and to preserve their identity as wives, mothers and daughters.

The other aim of this study is to elaborate gender preferences. Deshpande’s novels revolve around Indian society’s gender preferences. Her novels are similar with Anita Desai’s novel Fasting, Feasting. Anita Desai is critical of the family value system in
which a son is always pampered in comparison to the daughter. A son is allowed freedom whereas a daughter is always taught to exercise restraint and denial. The sons may be less talented and less intelligent than their daughters, but parents prefer spending money and give more attention on sons.

The indifferent and cold treatment of a woman towards a woman is one enemy of a suffering woman in society. It reminds us of so many woman characters in the novels of Shashi Deshpande and a number of other women novelists in English. The type of gender discrimination of a woman towards a woman can be seen in Mahesh Dattani’s *Tara*. Mahesh Dattani’s *Tara* is concerned not only with the issue of gender discrimination in Indian society but also with the contribution of the female to the injustice towards women. So social customs and male chauvinism cannot be the only enemy of the woman.

From the very start of the twentieth century, married women began to taste of independence. In India we have a number of women writers in English who have contributed and deal with the theme of women emancipation. We have the voices of feminism in the writings of a number of writers such as Anita Desai, Kamala Das, Kamala Markandaya, and so on. Central characters in their works appear to be the mute witnesses of the woman’s endless suffering in the male-dominated society for centuries.

Another aim of this study is to elaborate to what extent Shashi Deshpande may be called feminist. For this purpose I have attempted a critique of the female protagonists
in select novels of Shashi Deshpande. Her novels contain a lot of material for feminist thought: woman’s sexuality, the gender roles, self-discovery, etc. But she does not want her writing to be called feminist writing. G. S. Amur remarks, “For her portrayal of the predicament of educated Indian women, their inner conflict and quest for identity, issues pertaining to parent-child relations, marriage and sex, and their exploitation and disillusionment, Deshpande may be called a ‘feminist’.” Her feminism is peculiarly Indian in the sense that it is born out of the predicament of Indian women placed between contradictory identities: tradition and modernity, family and profession.

Section 1

A Brief Social Survey of Marriage

Marriage is an institution and a social union or legal contact between individuals that creates kinship. It is the union of two people who make a permanent and exclusive commitment to each other. Marriage as one of the social institutions is a relationship in which one person sees himself or herself bonded to another in significant ways involving intimacy or assumptions of intimacy. People marry for many reasons, most often including: legal, social, emotional, economical, spiritual, and religious. But marriage is an institution that is historically filled with restrictions. From age, to race, to social status, to gender, restrictions are placed on marriage by society.
Marriage, like all other human institutions, necessarily changes shape with the changes of social development. The last century has witnessed profound changes in the functions and stability of marriage. The forms of marriage are transitional, like the societies in which they exist. Clearly not everyone viewed marriage as an honor or memorable event, but even more clearly, many women did it out of necessity.

Some women expect marriage to provide the happiness that they have never before had in their lives. Some people go into marriage expecting that they will find new freedom, or an escape from whatever problems had plagued them before marriage. Sometimes they find that marriage only adds to their problems. But “Marriage is a status, not a cure.”

There are some psychological reasons for getting married:

1. One of the most important reasons is the fear of being left without a mate.

2. Sexual attraction is an obvious psychological factor in mate selection.

3. Another psychological factor in mate selection is the individual’s need for ‘finance’. Sometimes romantic and financial are intertwined. Some would marry for money.

4. Escape usually from oppressive parents, is another reason in mate selection. Some young people want to get away from their repressive parents. But according to Richard Klemer, “Only later does the escaping pair discover that
marriage does not diminish restrictions and responsibilities; it increases them.\textsuperscript{15}

5. Love is the predominant factor that creates families and holds them together. Motives for marriage such as escape, revenge, social status, etc are in conflict with ‘predictable marriage success’. But the most important one is a warm, close, abiding love. “This kind of love embraces not only the feeling of joyful exaltation in being together but also the feeling of tenderness that only two people who really care about one another can share.”\textsuperscript{16} In fact a woman needs love and care because she is more considerate in affairs of love than a man.

It is because of a lack of ability, desire, security or sometimes because of all of these put together, that marital communication tends to fail. According to Richard Klemer, “Communication can lead to understanding and understanding to acceptance and acceptance to adjustments in marriage.”\textsuperscript{17} So communication can improve or even maintain their relationship.

Family is the basic social unit in which people live in a network of mutual ties and obligations. As Neera Desai points out that it provides a sense of belonging and togetherness. It is in the family that we have our first experiences of joy and sorrow, love and hate and other shared experiences. In times of crisis we turn to the family.\textsuperscript{18} Family also means “security, shelter, and power” but for some people it means uncertainty and insecurity. But according to Simone de Beauvoir, “to do away with the family is not necessary to emancipate woman.”\textsuperscript{19}
The family in India is largely patrilineal. It means the core of the family is the males. This patrilineal model gives a low position to its women. Her worth is measured in terms of her ability to produce male children. A son is looked upon as the supporter and heir of family. Neera Desai remarks

Unlike a daughter who must change loyalties after marriage, a son is considered to be a good investment and insurance for the future. The strong preference for a son has to be understood in terms of two institutions interlinked with family: property and religion.²⁰

A married woman’s status is dependent on her ability to produce a male child. So there are social pressures on her to bear sons. Deniz Kandiyoti points out, “the young bride enters her husband’s household as an effectively dispossessed individual who can establish her place only by producing male offspring.”²¹ It shows the value of men to women.

In the traditional family the older women also control younger women and enforce qualities of docility, obedience, and submission as ‘the role they are given to implement the patriarchal values.’ Kandiyoti describes the control and manipulation of women under ‘classic’ Indian patriarchy, that girls, are subordinate not only to all the men but also to the more senior women, especially their mother-in-law.²²

The position of women in different societies all over the world is different from that of men. It is the socio-cultural factor that determines the status of women in a society. In India gender inequalities are inherent in the traditional social structures based on caste, community and class and the inequalities between men and women are seen in areas
like economic, education, marriage, political areas, etc. It is worth noting that in some cases the gender gap has indeed decreased e.g. there are legal changes in inheritance, marriage, divorce, education, and employment emphasizing equality. But women’s roles are still determined by traditional norms in spite of being influenced by modern values of rights, equality and justice.

Man has often looked down upon woman as the weaker sex in political, religion, social life, etc. Woman is regarded subordinate to man. Her sphere is usually restricted to the familial roles. Discrimination and oppression against women are mental, physical and emotional injury to women in marriage. In Indian society, Neera Desai points out,

Much of the devaluation of women results due to the non-recognition of their work within the family…. Early marriage precede by cheerless childhood,…. the strange family as the husband’s home, the anxiety about giving birth to male children,… the various intrigues for position among the women, the use of manipulation of males (sons)… are the various expressions of an unjust social structure- the family.23

These aspects affect a woman’s life and a woman may go through some of these experiences. Traditionally, it was believed that women were essentially different in character from men. The woman should be obedient, silent, chaste and pious. It was determined that the more virtuous women maintained a more stable home life. This silence can be a problem for women. “The subversion of the dominate gender and kinship ideology that places them in subordinate positions is embedded in silence and
contradictions. They do not offer any critique of their situation or directly challenge male authority.”

Some women are not assertive and, at times, “seem so slavish that their love and loyalty towards their husband and family do not allow them to raise any voice against them.” But some women do not want to confine themselves to shallow norms of social responsibilities. Hence they revolt and assert. Now woman is a changed person who is aware of the stirrings of her conscience, her identity, her individuality, her place and role in the family and society. They want to establish a new image.

Mary Austell and much later, Virginia Woolf viewed that, education alone can ensure her place in the society and expand woman’s consciousness of the world. Hence, education is as an important means of emancipation. Today education is one of the important factors in improving women’s position in the society. It influences better knowledge and a better social status. One important social factor affecting participation in education is marriage. Generally, it has been found that the more similar the husband and wife are in educational level, the greater is their marriage happiness.

The decision to educate the girls is taken within the family. Many families think higher education as unimportant for girls. Women cannot participate in the social and economical life unless they start for their rights within the family. It is the male child who is more likely to be sent for higher education. Girls have less opportunity for education than boys. “The parental family undertakes the first conditioning for
acceptance of an unequal status, where young girls are taught to be submissive and docile while boys are given importance and status.\textsuperscript{26}

Indian society continues to be governed by the traditional value system, wherein women were clearly assigned the roles as wife and mother. Changes in the socio-economic conditions of modern life and the spread of education have led to the emergence and participation of a large number of middleclass women in the different spheres of activity. The postcolonial India has shown much emphasis on education, which has in turn benefited women at least in finding good employment and good marriages. But, the condition of average women, has not, improved much.

The institution of marriage has undergone significant changes in recent decades as women have outpaced men in education. The last several decades have seen profound changes in the roles of women in the labor market and the family. One subject of concern has been the conflict that women face between their roles in the two spheres. Some educated women become economically independent. Some women have to earn their livelihood and look after their children and themselves because they have no male around.

Woman is still dependent upon her husband for maintenance. But not all women have a class position, and not all women are housewives. Occupation is an important social role. But women are often excluded from the higher positions of power. Women’s lack of access to economy resources is responsible for her subordination to man, even when she contributes equally or more to the family economy.
One of the important features in post-independence India is the increase in the number of employed women from middle class. There has been a rapid increase of higher proportion of graduate women in the last three and four decades. And women with higher education have found greater opportunities, and also work becomes a way of improving social mobility for the family. But according to Neera Desai

There are considerations, such as: whether the job has social prestige; whether it is above or below that of the husband; whether it means mixing with men; whether it permits women to continue to perform their domestic responsibilities and so on…. The control over the income earned is not necessarily in the woman’s hands. Nor does it always improve the woman’s position with respect to authority and decision making, within the family.27

It is sometimes difficult to identify what are the proper expectations for role performance. For example, many women are unsure whether or not they should work outside the home. As Richard Klemer says, “today, because of confused expectations, some women feel guilty if they do work outside the home… If marriage partners had substantial agreement on role expectations, most marriages might be more stable than they are.”28

The status of the female is equal to that of her male. Style of life, income, education, occupation, power, etc might all be considered in evaluating the equality of husband and wife in the class structure. Cynthia Cockburn says, “A man has to tolerate not only his wife’s absence but also the intrusion of union business into the home. The phone rings a lot-and it’s for her.” She adds, “Men are experiencing disturbance in two spheres, provoked by changes in women, economic and domestic behaviour.”29 These
women in men’s eyes are less ready to accept a husband’s authority. Being involved outside the home reduces the priority a woman places on domestic responsibilities. Cockburn further says, “Men do have difficulty in seeing a woman as anything other than a secretary, a sex object or a wife.”30

Women are entering into professions with men on equal terms. Economic participation of working class women gives them more power in decision making in their families.

“There was concern about the anomalous situation of so-called ‘cross-class families’ where a woman’s occupational position was higher than that of her husband …. For example, if a male plumber were married to a female neuro-surgeon conventional measures would define their household as working class hardly to be an accurate representation.”31

First step towards a dignified existence is women desire for economic independence. As Margaret Benston stresses that women’s entrance into the workforce will be a step away from, or toward liberation. She says that women, particularly married women with children, who work outside the home simply do two jobs; their participation in the labour force is only allowed if they continue to fulfill their first responsibility in the home.32 She believes that the single factor that will end women’s oppression as a group and give each and every woman the respect she deserves is the socialization of private housekeeping and tending children. One of the basic differences in marriages results from the almost complete change in work that marriage brings in her life but not in his. But for women, earning their own money has proved a necessary but insufficient step towards liberation. They will put the family first if it comes to crunch.
The husband usually earns more and has a higher social, occupational status. Some men prefer their work, because it gives them a place in society. Men suffer from the increased independence of women and the growing ‘volatility of marriage’. “The dilemma for men is intensifying as women-with advances in contraceptive …, access to a salary, backed by this pervasive ideology of ‘equality’ and with feminist ideas always within reach, become new people.”

Indian women have been suffering from gender discrimination and silent persecution. Man governs and controls all the affairs of the family especially financial matters. The financial matter is the most important point for subjugation the rights of women. ‘Money’ shows power and freedom. Women suffer a lot because they do not have equal status with men. They are exploited both ‘economically’ and ‘socially’. Simone de Beauvoir believes that women destiny is determined by psychological, physiological, and economic forces. She says,

> When a man is in a cooperative and benevolent relation with woman, his theme is the principle of abstract equality, and he does not base his attitude upon such inequality as may exist. But when he is in conflict with her, the situation is reversed: his theme will be the existing inequality.

Therefore this discrimination between sexes may stem from tradition and cultural attitudes. A woman may have no right in the matters of marriage, economic, and property, etc. So oppression lies here in the patriarchal system of society. Women acquire some measure of social space, greater social interaction outside their family. “These gains have been also offset by a heavy price, in terms of greater physical,
mental and emotional strain, induced by the necessity to manage two roles…. A consequence of the dual role was the loss of promotional opportunities in their careers.”

Section 2

A Brief Historical Survey of Marriage

The eighteenth century is a very significant period in order to analyse how the society at that time dealt with love and marriage. In nineteenth century England, marriage was viewed in large part as a woman’s understood destiny and a man’s social prerogative. By taking a wife, a man essentially laid claim to her and to all her assets. The woman also became subordinate to her husband. In the past, it may have been the case that most marriages were entered into as a political or economic arrangement in order to secure a more favorable position for one’s self or one’s family.

To remain single was thought a disgrace and at thirty an unmarried woman was called an old maid. If they had a brother, they might live in his house after their parents died. Some had to maintain themselves and difficulty arose. The only paid occupation open to them was to become a governess under miserable conditions. Marriage, then, was a social placement or in some cases, ‘a demotion in social status for men as well as women’.
The marriage of a man and woman was not always a happy experience but occasionally an act of necessity. A woman often needed to wed to insure her livelihood and well-being. In most cases men held all the recourses and women had no independent means of subsistence, so they had to obey men. A woman who remained single would attract social disapproval and pity because she could not follow a profession, since they were closed to women.

Women were expected to be occupied in childbearing and housewifery. The problem for the women was that womanhood was bound to the care of others, especially children and husbands. To them, this was women’s work, which offered them a place at the centre of family life, and status and power - which work outside the home, did not offer. In the past, women whether of Indian or British middle classes, would be trained not for careers, but to be good wives and mothers. Reading, writing, needlework, embroidery were regarded as being more than adequate for women.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, girls received less education than boys, were barred from universities, and could obtain only low-paid jobs. They were forced into a very small range of occupations. Women’s purpose was to marry and reproduce. Most women had little choice but to marry and everything they owned inherited and earned automatically belonged to their husband.

Among the rich families, wealth passed down the male line and a daughter got a small percentage. A woman could become independent only if she had no brothers, came from a very wealthy family, and remained unmarried. A very wealthy woman might
make a premarital agreement for her wealth, but in the majority of cases marriage stripped a woman of all her assets and handed them to her husband. A woman’s fate depended on her husband. If he earned enough to support her she would usually cease work, otherwise she worked all her life. Anything she earned belonged to him.

The clearest embodiment of the status of early English women is the restricted legal rights and limited access to property. They believed that women are weak and in need of protection. As Tim Stretto observes,

A married woman was known as a *feme covert* because her legal identity was covered or overshadowed by her husband’s. Because she lacked an independent personality, in theory a married woman could not enter into contracts,….. Worse than that, she could not control property, which technically prevented her from personally accepting gifts or inheriting legacies…. A woman’s real property also came under her husband’s control, although only for the duration of the marriage.  

Getting married carried for a woman the loss of all her properties, because when a woman married a man “her properties went straight to her husband, to do with as he thought best. The sole and absolute property rests in the husband, to be disposed of at his pleasure.” Testators, who made a will, left all their lands to their eldest sons. Daughters could inherit lands only in the absence of surviving sons. That oversaw the kinds of exclusions of females from inheriting estates that are so common in Jane Austen’s novels. But women’s legal right and access to property improved over the course of modern period.
Women were excluded from participation in the industries and married women apparently carry on their domestic work. With the separation of work from the home, men increased their control over production and became less dependent on women, and they excluded women from education, industry, etc. So women became more dependent on men economically.

Middle-class women were, according to Wollstonecraft, ‘kept’ women who sacrificed health, liberty, and virtue for whatever prestige, pleasure, and power their husbands could provide. Wollstonecraft considered women’s autonomy might depend on women’s economic and political independence from men, but she decided well-educated women did not need to be economically self-sufficient in order to be autonomous. Mary Wollstonecraft wrote at a time when economic and social position of European women was in decline.

Before capitalism, men controlled the labour of women. But with the advent of public/private separations such as those created by the emergence of economic systems; the problem for men became one of maintaining their control over the labour power of women. The emergence of capitalism threatened patriarchal control as if it destroyed many old institutions. “It destroyed the basis of the power of men over women because it brought women into the labour force,”38 But a great increase in feminine leisure certainly occurred in the early eighteenth century.
Work was gendered: some works were considered appropriate for women. Majority of single women chose to work as temporary occupation, and some of them continued in service as a permanent vocation. As Sara H. Mendelson says,

> Partly because there were so few vocational prospects for ordinary women, marriage as an occupation was by default one of their more attractive options…. Yet marriage could also lead to greater poverty if either partner became incapacitated, or if the couple had more children than they were able to support.\(^39\)

In India, with its strong bent for tradition, woman was expected mainly for others than for herself because ‘others’ controlled the social structure. In Indian mythology, the ideal women, like Sita, Savitri, Draupadi, etc., have been dutiful, truthful, chaste, self-sacrificing women. In India, traditionally woman’s destiny was marriage and she must worship and treat her husband like a god. Marriage was obligatory for girls. They would be married to undesirable men if a proper man was not available.

Traditionally, marriage for women- except in certain matriarchal tribes- has entailed a most submissive feminine role. In a patriarchal society, marriage occupies an important position. It is necessary to aim for a union between economic and social equals. Women should be kept in dependency by her husband. Some women regard the husband is a protective fence, however bad he may be to her. If a woman marries a man of lower status, it will lower the prestige of her. But men can marry in the lower status group and are free in choosing their women. So they can get political power or wealth. But later Gandhi struggled for freedom from caste, racial and social
prejudices. Only recently have some women in the dominate patriarchal tradition started to question aspects of this role or decided against marriage altogether.

However the place of women has differed in society. As Ashok Kumar remarks, “There is, however, no denying the fact that the one-time idealized and idolized images of women have undergone some unprecedented metamorphosis all the world over, especially in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.” The religious, historical, political factors appear to have their impact on the status of women. But the position of woman is changing and they are struggling for freedom. But the subjugation of women continues.

Section 3

A Brief Survey of Feminism

Sociologists studied the world of men as if men constituted the whole of society and rendered women invisible. But the resurgence of feminism in the 1970s changed this state of affairs, countering the assumption that existing differences between women and men were ordained by nature. Women desire a sense of wholeness and authenticity. Mary Eagleton points out that women find it difficult to give expression to their true selves and can feel invisible or marginal in a male-dominated culture.

Part of the struggle of feminism has been to support women in creating new images of themselves, a sense of wholeness and a more authentic representation of what it means
to be a woman. In this endeavor emphasis is given to the centrality of personal experience, the need to find one’s own voice and to give an account of one’s inner self.\footnote{42} It shows the problem of choice. For example, she does not have a free choice about career possibilities; about her appearance; about marrying or not marrying.

There has been an explosion of writings on feminism since 1969. Feminism emerged as a movement in support of the same rights and opportunities for women as for men. Feminist consciousness, in literature originated from the struggle for women’s social cultural and political rights which started in eighteenth century with Mary Wollstonecraft’s \textit{A Vindication of the Rights of Women}, concerning- the quest for recognition of women’s socio-cultural roles.

For the recognition of women’s claim for equal political, social and economic rights there has been a long struggle in the west. The male dominated society had devoured the women’s identity and so they are in constant search of their self for the justification of their existence against the patriarchal society. In France, Simon de Beauvoir(1908–1986) launched a critical mode of the cultural identification of women who are only the negative ‘object’ or ‘other’ to man who is the dominating ‘subject’.

Kate Millet (1934) in her \textit{Sexual Politics} analyses how western social arrangement and institutions are covert ways of manipulating power to establish and perpetuate the female subordination under male domination. In England, Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) wrote \textit{A Room of One’s Own} and numerous other essays on women authors with a
view to highlight the cultural, economic and educational disabilities of women in patriarchal society. Virginia Woolf says,

> Women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties; they suffer from too rigid a restraint; it is narrow-minded to say that they ought to confine themselves to ‘making puddings and knitting stocking, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them,…, if they seek do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex.\(^{42}\)

Elaine Showalter (1941) has been a leading figure in American feminism and her *Literature of Their Own* is considered as a work of crucial importance. Showalter sees the period after the 1920 as the ‘female’ phase as it marks the recognition of women’s “experience as the source of autonomous art”. At this phase the woman writer rejects both ‘limitation and protest’ and embarks on a mission to analyse the female experience “extending the feminist analysis of culture to forms and techniques of literature.”\(^{43}\)

Most Feminist texts are written by women. They have a female audience in mind, and they discuss sympathetically the situation of women. The response of the reader and the attitude of the author determine whether or not a text is feminist. It is not preferred one feminist perspective over all the others. Here only some of the main perspective in feminist thought has explained. It is attracted both to those forms of feminism that describe women’s are- at the marriage and on the periphery.
Each of the schools of feminist thought have provided solution for women’s oppression that are rooted either in society’s political, economic structures or in human beings’ sexual and reproductive relationships. As Rosemarie Tong points out that feminism is not a monolithic ideology, that all feminists do think alike and that, like all other time-honored modes of thinking, feminist thought has a past as well as a present and a future.44

**Liberal feminists** believe that women are oppressed insofar as they suffer unjust discrimination. They claimed that changes in society’s political structures, particularly in its laws, could eliminate or reduce gender inequality by ensuring women are provided with the same educational and occupational opportunities men are provided. Mary Wollstonecraft, liberal feminist, argues that the roots of women’s oppression lie simply in our lack of equal rights and educational opportunities. But Jean Bethke Elshtain and Alison Jagger criticized liberal feminists for being too eager to adopt ‘male’ values. Liberal feminists have with exceptions moved away from their traditional belief that any woman can liberate herself ‘individually’ by ‘throwing off’ her conditioning and ‘unilaterally’ rejecting femininity.45

**Radical-libertarian** or **Radical-cultural feminists** see women’s oppression as consisting in the universal male control of women’s sexual and procreative capacities. Radical-cultural feminists stresses that male sexual behavior is not worthy of women’s emulation, since men frequently use sex as an instrument of control and domination rather than of love and bonding. The pioneering radical feminists, Charlotte Perkins
Gilman, Emma Goldman and Margaret Sanger, argued that women must take radical control over their bodies and lives.

Kate Millett is one of the first radical-libertarian feminists to insist the roots of women’s oppression are buried deep in patriarchy’s sex/gender system. She observes if women are to be liberated, male control must be eliminated. To eliminate male control, men and women have to eliminate gender-sexual status and role, because it has been constructed under patriarchy. According to her, patriarchy exaggerates biological differences between men and women, making certain that men have the dominate role and women have the subordinate one.46 Men and women should equal at every level of existence.

Marxist feminists claim that the ultimate cause of women’s oppression is classism and sexism. In contrast, socialist feminists claim that the main cause of women’s oppression is neither ‘classism’ nor ‘sexism’ but an intricate interplay between capitalism and patriarchy. Marxist and social feminists believe women’s oppression is not the result of individuals’ intentional actions but is the product of the political, social, and economic structures within which individuals live.47

So patriarchy and capitalism must be overthrown in order to humanize society. Marxist feminists have focused on the intersection between women’s experience as workers and their position in the family. Social feminists agree with Marxist feminists that women’s liberation depends on the overthrow of capitalism. But social feminists claim that capitalism cannot be destroyed unless patriarchy is also destroyed. Juliet
Mitchell, social feminist, observes that because of the ways in which patriarchy has constructed men’s and women’s psyches, women will continue to remain subordinate to men until their minds and men’s minds have been liberated from the thought that women are less than men’s full equals.48

Richard Foreman also observes that women’s alienation is disturbing because women experience themselves not as selves but as ‘others’. And “a woman’s sense of self is entirely dependent on her families’ and friends’ appreciation of her.”49 Thus Marxist feminists aim to create a world in which women can experience themselves as “whole persons, as integrated, as people who can be happy even when they are unable to ‘make’ their families and friends happy.”50

Psychoanalytic and gender feminists claim that the roots of women’s oppression are embedded deep in her psyche, especially, in women’s way of thinking. They claim that gender inequality is rooted in a series of early childhood experiences that result not only in men’s viewing themselves as masculine and women’s viewing themselves as feminine but also in patriarchal society’s regarding masculinity as somehow better than femininity.

For Psychoanalytic feminist, a focus on sexuality’s role in the oppression of women arises out of Freudian theory. According to Freud, children go through distinct psychosexual development stages, and the gender of any given adult is the product of how they deal with these stages. Dorothy Dinnerstein argues that men’s fear of women
is determined psychoanalytically by women’s domination of childcare. But Kate Millet
and Firestone rejected Freudian psychoanalysis as being inimical to women.

For Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings, gender feminists, femininity is women’s
blessing, not women’s burden. They pursue the relationship between women’s
psychology and morality. Simone de Beauvoir in the *Second Sex* argues that woman is
oppressed by virtue of her otherness. Man is the free, self-determining being who
defines the meaning of his existence; woman is the other, the object whose meaning is
determined for her. She must make herself a self and a subject. As soon as women
learn how to view themselves as men’s equals, society will have little if any power
over them.

**Post modern feminists (French feminism)** invite “each woman who reflects on their
writings to become the kind of feminist she wants to be. There is no formula for being
a ‘good feminist’.”51 Their aim is to write something new about women. They stress
that otherness is much more than an oppressed, inferior condition. The main features
of postmodernism are described in the works of Jean-Francoise Lytorad and Fredric
Jameson.

**Multicultural** and **global feminists** believe that the roots of this oppression are
cultural and national rather than sexual and literary. A woman is to experience herself
as a self within her own family circles but as the other outside of her home boundaries.
Agreeing with multicultural feminists that definition of feminism must be broadened
to include all the things that oppress women, whether based on race or class or
resulting from imperialism or colonialism, global feminists stress that women will not free until the conditions of oppression of women are eliminated everywhere. So having control over our bodies and lives is essential to ensure a sense of autonomy for every woman. Ethical relativism implies that global feminists “must accept even violence, and such patriarchal and exploitative institutions and customs as dowry, female genital mutilation, India’s caste system.”

Legal, political, economic institution, psychoanalytical explanations must be taken into account for the female subordination. One of these do not proved explanation for female subordination. Because the legal, political, economic, social, and cultural circumstances restrain and constrain women. Mary Eagleton says,

Not only may a man behave in a way that is deemed ‘feminine’ and a woman behave in a ‘masculine’ manner, but our very understanding of what constitutes ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ changes constantly in time and between different cultures and social groups.

As we see in this analysis, the feminist critics claim that the patriarchal ideology pervades even literature. In most works, the female characters are shown as marginal or subordinate beings. But male characters are given masculine traits. So a major interest of feminist critics has been to reconstitute all the ways of dealing with literature. The recurrent ‘images of women’ in literature should be identified. These critics wish to identify the authors who have forced negative social roles on women.

Extracts from Michele Barrett and Rosalind Coward prove that we cannot take women's writing to be a synonym for 'feminist' writing. Feminism is “an alignment of
political interests, which some women writers may adopt and others not.” 54 According to Rosalind Coward,

> It is not possible to say that women-centred writings have any necessary relationship to feminism.... The Mills and Boon romantic novels are... are all about women. Yet nothing could be further from the aims of feminism than fantasies based on the sexual, racial and class submission which so frequently characterize these novels.55

Therefore women-centred novels do not become feminist simply because feminists read them. Coward claims further that it is rare to find a novel such as Jane Austen's *Emma* where the sentimental lesson is combined with an intellectual lesson, that of discretion. It is sufficient to bring them forward here to indicate that women-centred novels are not the product of a feminist audience. Nor can we say that the structures of the realist novel are neutral and that they can just be filled with a feminist content.56

The movement for emancipation of women in India began in the nineteenth century. Feminism in India relates to the belief that woman should have the same social economic and political rights as men. The term became popular as early as 20th century struggles for securing woman’s suffrage or voting rights in the western countries. Sarojini Naidu struggled at lot to redeem Indian Women from the clutches of slavery and subordination. Gandhi also gave a new direction to the Feminist movement in India. He freed women from passivity and domesticity. He believed that men and women were partners, sharing equal rights in social life and political field.
In the Indian context, the dominate approach has been liberal feminist, but some of the ideas and concepts of the radical feminists and socialists feminists, Psychoanalytic and gender feminists have to be critically used in India where conditions of poverty, unemployment, insufficient development prevail. Three types of Feminism, **Liberal Feminism**, **Radical Feminism**, and **Socialist Feminism**, differ in their analysis of the causes of subordinate position of Indian women. Let us discuss in brief the three perspectives.

An important tenet of **Liberal Feminism** was individualism, by which it was meant that individual possesses the freedom to do what he wishes without interference from others. They accepted the common arrangement by which the man earns the family income and the wife superintends the domestic expenditure. Liberal feminism overlooked the necessary connection between sexual oppression, sexual division of labour and the economic class structure. In the same way, Indian social reformers of the nineteenth century gave right of education to women so that they become better wives and mothers, removal of social customs like ‘sati’, child marriage, etc.

Mary Wollstonecraft, a well-known liberal thinker, believes that women are first and foremost human beings and not sexual beings. They are capable of governing themselves by reason. Stuart Mill another liberal thinker argues that the existing relations between the sexes, the legal subordination of one sex to the other, is wrong in itself, and it ought to be replaced by the perfect equality admitting no power or privilege on the one side nor disability on the other.\(^{57}\)
The sex role differences are accepted but both considered equal. The liberal feminism does not provide more insights into the roots of women’s inferior status. They argue for equal rights for women and advocate for improvement of social customs without altering the social structure or the family.

**Radical Feminism** has important ties with the liberal feminism. Liberal Feminism overlooks the necessary connection between sexual oppression, sexual division of labour and economic class structure. Radical feminists demand for the destruction of patriarchy. Their main contention is that the roots of subordination lie in the biological distinction, sex roles, and the sexual division of society. The biological differences result in the male domination of power over women.

The biological distinction i.e. male/female is used to distinguish social functions and power. They consider gender relations to be the fundamental form of oppression. They see patriarchy’s chief institution is the family. Masculine hostility manifests itself through rape and sexual violence. Solidarity among the women should be developed and women should be self-reliant so that they are not dependent on men in any sense.

**Socialist Feminism** fond inadequacies in the argument that subordination of women in a capitalist society arises because this serves the needs of capitalism when confronted with the persistence of gender inequalities in socialists societies. It would be necessary to struggle against capitalism and patriarchy. According to them, the unequal sex role operates in both the domains of family and economy. The
powerlessness of women is rooted in production, reproduction, sexuality, and socialization of children.

Like the radical feminists, the socialist-feminists are not anti-man; they believe in collaborating with men. Men should support their cause and do not exhibit an instrumental approach towards women. According to socialists view, women’s inferior status is “rooted in private property, and class –divided society.”

They consider that family and economy should not be looked as separate systems but as interacting systems. Socialist feminists agree “the way to end women’s oppression is to kill the two-headed beast of capitalist patriarchy or patriarchal capitalism.”

Money is one of the most fundamental measures of equality. In the nineteenth century, with the industrial revolution, the claims of the feminists acquired an economic basis. Friedrich Engels points out that the legal inequality of husband and wife is not the cause but the effect of economic oppression of the woman. In patriarchal family, if woman wants to take part in public production and earn independently, she cannot carry out family duties.

Friedrich Engels believes that the husband earns a living and supports his family, and that gives him a position of supremacy, without any need for special privileges. And the first condition for the liberation of the wife is to bring the whole female back into public industry. Friedrich Engels says, “The emancipation of women will only be possible when women can take part in production on a large, social scale, and domestic work no longer claims anything but an insignificant amount of her time.”
He argues that the source of oppression of women came from the exclusion of women from social production and the conversion of household takes into a private service.

Engels believed man’s control of woman is rooted in the fact that he controls the property. Only the elimination of women’s economic dependence on men will allow men and women to enter marriages based on love. Engels argued that if wives are to be emancipated from their husbands, women must first become economically independent of men because he believed that proletarian women experience less oppression than do bourgeois women. So woman’s status and function must change if she is to achieve liberation.

Another feminist, Harriet Taylor asserted that a married woman cannot be her husband’s true equal unless she has the confidence and sense of entitlement that come from contributing “materially to the support of the family.” So according to her, wives must earn an income outside of the home. John Stuart Mill also believed that women more than men are responsible not only for creating a family but also for maintaining it.

Betty Friedan (1921-2006), in *The Feminine Mystique*, did not demand that women sacrifice marriage and motherhood for a high-powered career. She stated “The assumption of your own identity, equality, and even political power does not mean you stop needing to love, and be loved by, a man, or that you stop caring for your own kids.” But Rosemary Tong points out *The Feminine Mystique* misjudged just how difficult it would be for even privileged women to combine a career with marriage and
motherhood unless major structural changes were made within as well as outside the family. Friedan message was that unless women become like men, they would never be liberated. But each person should combine the same correct blend of positive masculine and feminine characteristics in order to be equal with every other person.

There is a lack of awareness about pains and agony related to women. Therefore the significant of feminist study increases. Society should accept the fact that men and women have to shoulder responsibilities together. There should be equal opportunities for both sexes. So as Elizabeth Wilson points out, “Feminists should have thought more about how to construct a plurality of positive images of women. As it is, women have fallen back on to the notion of the 'strong woman'.”
Notes


2. Ibid., p. 10.


8. Ibid, p.16.


15. Ibid., p. 127.

16. Ibid., p. 132.

17. Ibid., p. 213.


22. Ibid., p.278.


27. Ibid., p.103.


30. Ibid., p.187.
31. Ibid., p.86.


34. Ibid., P.9.


43. Ibid., p. 149.

44. Ibid., p. 150.


48. Ibid., p. 86.


50. Ibid., p. 94.

51. Ibid., p. 120.
52. Ibid., p.100.

53. Ibid., p.193.

54. Ibid., p.195.


56. Ibid., p.149.


58. Ibid. p.17.


