POST-MODERNISM IN SHOBHA DE’S NOVELS

CHAPTER- I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Modernism and Post-modernism:

Literary criticism was an institutionalized discipline that had set the norms of literary appreciation and regulated the process of literary studies till the first half of the twentieth century. There were interpretive methods, terms and frameworks that were essentially literary and there were distinct categories as literary and non-literary. The non-literary was carefully separated and rigorously kept outside the literary discussions. While more conventional criticism dealt with historical, moral and biographical issues that were considered vital for literary understanding, the modern criticism moved towards textual interpretation. This move towards textual study was challenged by several competing extra-literary approaches and with language becoming the focal point of examination. Critical approaches started making inroads into literary criticism. This was the rise of literary theory and that it questioned many conventional and modern literary ideas. It is significant to understand that the route of theory passed through the two most dominant movements of the twentieth century- modernism and post-modernism. These movements were not literary or linguistic in their orientations and not limited to the discussion of the writer, text and the world. They covered a formidable range of literary and extra-literary issues in their fold and thus maintained both conventional traces and contemporary form and content. Any discussion of modernism and post-modernism, therefore, cannot become adequately justifiable unless their exhaustive contexts are taken into account. These
movements successively liberated the literary and non-literary movements from the strictures of form and content in case of literary composition and analysis and ushered in several radical ideas. Therefore a synoptic survey of these movements becomes imperative and provides a necessary background to the present study of Shobha De’s selected novels.

1.2 Post-modernism:

It was in the late 20th century as a reaction to modernism that the term post-modernism was used by many theorists. In order to understand post-modernism and its characteristics, it is necessary to correlate it with modernism. The post-modernists rejected many ideas proposed and entertained by the modernists. To cite an example, the modernists in most of their works attempted to present a fragmented view of human life in lamented mood, while the post-modernists instead of lamenting the fragmentation of life tried to celebrate it in their works. The post-World War II literature reflects the enlightened ideas which were implicit in the modernist literature.

1.2.1 Definition of Modernism:

Modernism is the name given to the movement which dominated the arts and culture of the first half of the 20th century. Does postmodernism continue modernism or oppose it? It should be noted that the term postmodernism has become current since 1980s. In Dictionary of Literary Terms and Theory J.A.Cuddon describes postmodernism by an eclectic approach, aleatory writing, parody and pastiche. This shows that the use of fragmented forms, element of randomness, chance and the use of parody are elements found both in modernism and post-modernism. Both give prominence to fragmentation but in very different moods with quite distinctly opposed attitudes. In “These Fragments I have
shored against my ruins” in The Waste Land by T.S.Eliot, there is a tone of lament, pessimism and despair. By contrast, for the post-modernist, fragmentation is an exhilarating, liberating phenomenon, symptomatic of escape from the claustrophobic of embrace of fixed systems of belief. In short, the modernist laments fragmentation, while the post-modernist celebrates it.

1.2.2 Differences between Modernism and Post-modernism:

The difference between the two is again a matter of tone or attitude. An important aspect of modernism was a fierce asceticism. Minimalism in poems of poet like Ezra Pound, and William Carlos William or the plays of few minutes of Sammuel Beckett are illustrations of this asceticism. By contrast, postmodernism rejects the distinction between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ art and believes in excess in gaudiness, and in ‘bad taste’ mixtures of qualities. It disdains the modernist asceticism as elitist. The poetry of writers like Craig Raine or Christopher Reid illustrates this post modernism trend through colourful mixtures of imagery, viewpoint and vocabulary that jostle on a surface which is nothing but a surface. It should therefore be noted that modernism and postmodernism belong to different periods, the first half of the twentieth century and the last two decades of the last century respectively. They are not two successively stages but two opposed moods or attitudes. Their opposition to each other is noted in their attitudes towards fragmentation and asceticism. The distinction between “high” and “popular” art which was important in modernism is rejected by postmodernism.
1.2.3 Modernism versus Post-modernism:

- The Western norms and values such as belief, culture and faith are being rejected by the post-modern writers, which were highly entertained by the modernists. The post-modern writers looked upon these norms as a small part of human experience. Thus the post-modernists appeared to be suspicious of being "profound" as they find them as based on one particular Western value systems. Whereas the modernists tried to present the profound truths of experience and life.

- Modernists attempt to reveal depth and meaning beneath the surface of objects and events, post-modernists believe in dwelling on the exterior image. They always avoid drawing conclusions or suggesting underlying meanings associated with the interior of objects and events.

- The modernists concentrated on the central theme of a particular piece of work of art and the post-modernists look at all human experiences unsalable, ambiguous, incomplete, fragmented and lacking the specific reality. As a result they emphasised on the vision of contradictory life as seen in the reality.

- The modernists attempted to control the responses of the readers to their works and also guided them through their writings, the post-modernists created open ended works and expected the readers to give their responses and interpret the texts on their own.

With this broad understanding of the differences between the theoretical premises and practices of modernism and post-modernism, it would be sensible to know the characteristics of post-modernism.
1.3 Theoretical Statements:

The major landmarks in the march of postmodernism are the theoretical statements made by the three theorists of postmodernism who are German theorist Jurgen Habermas, the French critic Jean Francis Loytard and the French writer Jean Baudrillard.

1.3.1 Habermas:

The history of postmodernism is marked by the influential paper “Modernity-an Incomplete Project” delivered by Habermas in 1980. For Habermas, the modern period begins with the enlightenment—the period from 1650 to 1750. It is characterized by a new faith in the power of reason to improve human society. It fosters the belief in the break with tradition, blind habit and slavish obedience to religious precepts and prohibitions. This coupled with the application of reason and logic can bring about a solution to the problems of society. For Habermas this faith in reason and the possibility of progress survived in two the twentieth century. The culture increment known as modernism subscribed to this Enlightenment Project. According to Harbermas, Derrida and Foucault represented a reputation of this kind of Enlightenment modernity.

1.3.2 Lyotard:

The term postmodernism appeared in the 1930s but its current sense and vogue began with Jean Francois Loytard’s essay “Answering the Questions: What is Postmodernism?” was first published in 1982. In 1984 it was added as an appendix to The Post-modern Conditions. It was in 1992 that it was included in Brooker’s Modernism/Postmodernism. Lyotard takes up the enlightenment debate, mainly targeting Habermas in a slight oblige manner, Lyotard opens with a move which effectively turns the debate into a struggle. He says, “From every direction, we are being urged to put an end to experimentation.”
Habermas’s is simply one voice in a chorus which is calling for an end to ‘artistic experimentation and for order ……unity, for identity, for security’ (142). In a word, for these voices want ‘to liquidate the heritage of the avant-gardes’. For Lyotard, the Enlightenment project is simply one of the would-be authoritative ‘over-arching,’ ‘totalizing explanations of things. These meta-narratives-super-narratives-which purports to explain and reassure are really illusions, fostered in order to smother difference, opposition and plurality towards. Lyotard’s famous definition of postmodernism is that postmodernism is simply incredulity towards meta-narratives. Grand narratives of progress and human perfectibility then, are no longer tenable. The best we can hope for is a series of mini-narratives’, which are provisional, contingent, temporary, and relative. This provides a basis for the action of specific groups in particular local circumstances. Postmodernity thus, “deconstructs” the basic aim of the enlightenment that is the idea of a unitary and of history and of a subject.

1.3.3 Baudrillard:

Another major theoretical statement of postmodernism is the book *Simulations* (1919, translated 1983) by the French writer Jean Baudrillard. He is associated with the view known as ‘the loss of the real.’ This view holds that in contemporary life the pervasive influence of images from films, TV and advertising has led to a loss of the distinction between real and imagined reality and illusion, surface and depth. His proportions are worked out in his essay *Simulacra and Simulations* reprinted in 1992.He begins by evoking a past era of fullness when a sign was a surface indication of an underlying depth or reality. But what, he asks, if a sign is not an index of an underlying reality? Then the whole system becomes what he calls simulacrum. He then substitutes for representation the notion of
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simulation. The sign reaches its present stage of emptiness in a service of four stages. Firstly the sign represent a basic reality, secondly it misrepresents the reality behind it, thirdly, the sign disguises the fact that there is no corresponding reality underneath and fourthly, the sign bears no relation to any reality at all. In a new notorious pronouncement Baudrillard mentioned that the Gulf war never happened that what “really” took place was a kind televised virtual reality. The criminal category in Baudrillard’s four- stages model is the third one, the sign which conceals an absence that the supposedly ‘real’ is no longer there. It is illustrated by the idealized images of masculinity or feminity presented in advertisements – no actual people are quite like these, though people might strive to become like them. In this way the image tents to become the reality and the two tend to become indistinguishable.

1.4 Post-modernist Criticism:

1.4.1 Background to the Post-Modernist Criticism:

Against this theoretical background, the postmodernist critics attempt to discover post-modernistic themes, tendencies and attitudes within literary works of the twentieth century and explore their implications. They foreground fiction which might exemplify the notion of the disappearance of the real and in which the mixing of literary genres is noted. They foreground what might be called inter-textual elements such as parody, pastiche and illusion. They foreground irony in the sense that the modernist tries to destroy the past, the postmodernist realizes that the past must be revisited but with irony. (Peter, Booker: 1992: .270) They foreground the element of ‘narcissism ‘in narrative techniques. They challenged the distinction between high and low culture and highlight texts which work as hybrid
blends of the two. Jeffrey Nealon’s, *Samuel Beckett and the Post-modern Language Games, Play and Waiting for Godot* is useful as an example of postmodernist criticism (Steven, Conner: 1992:121). Waiting for Godot seems to be an important activity in 20th century drama as noticed in the plays of Beckett and Pinter.

1.4.2 Ihab Hassan, Stephen Fielder and Terry Eagleton:

Post-modernism thus refers to the cultural and literary phenomenon of the 1980s. It is characterized by diversity of interests. It acts as a potent force against modernist stand. Postmodernism as a moment in reaction against “modern” emerged in architecture, painting, music, writing and theatre in the 1980s. Post-modernism introduces different moods such as it betrays a tone of self-conscious skepticism, sense of alienation and fascination for absurdity. It strives to close the gap between elite culture and popular culture by absorbing the elements of contemporary popular culture chiefly science fiction, pornography and the Western. Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita*, Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead*, Gore Vidal’s *Myra Bleckinridge*, Philip Roth’s *Portnoy’s Complaint*’ Stephen Schneck’s *The Night Clerk*, Leonard Cohen’s *Beautiful Losers* are some examples of the Post-modernist works. The scope of post-modernist study has widened considerably making one aware that there is enough in popular culture to provoke an intellectual situation and a world of ideas which can help us to understand the complexity of the age that we live in. The boundaries crumble and paths cross and re-cross. That is why Shobha De in India is being given a distinction inconceivable a few years ago. An Elvi’s *Priestleg Song* is considered apt enough to be given to college students for critical appreciation. Ihab Hassan’s book Para-criticisms points out that post-modernism is essentially anti-elitist and anti-authoritarian. Stephen Fiedler says that literature today is trying to revitalize itself
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through re-barbarization. The absence of an authority, the loss of reality, the heterogeneous perception of truth, the plurality of perception and the blurring of the boundaries between illusion and reality have all contributed to what Terry Eagleton calls a strong current of anything goes –ism in literature and cultural studies. Most of the post-modernist novels like Barth’s *The End of the Road*, Doris Lessing’s *The Golden Notebook*, Nabokov’s *Pale Fire* and Pynchon’s *Lot 49* deliberately cultivate hybridity of styles, magic realism, parody and self-reflexivity as Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*. Post-modernism has released art from the restrictive assumption and elitist hierarchies. It has encouraged several marginalized points of view. It has prompted such branches as subaltern studies, multiculturalism, Diasporas and others. Leslie Fiedler, Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, Ihab Hassan, Susan Sontag, Lind Hutcheon and others have contributed significantly to the propagation of post-modernism.

**1.5 Characteristics of Post-modernism:**

The broad characteristics of post-modernism would be (i) celebration of the fragmentation, questioning of identity-race, gender, ethnicity, sense of alienation, (ii) scepticism about institutions of power, authority (iii) fascination for absurdity in the use of parody, irony, pastiche (iv) magic realism (v) blurring of genres, playing with conventional form, science fiction, western, pornography (vi) popular art introduced through rejection of elitism (vii) opposition to rejection of meta-narratives, mini-narratives preferred, practiced (viii) the loss of the real-image-simulations-Marilyn Monad’s image (ix) the past visited but with irony,(x) self-reflexivity, narcissism (xi) globalization of economics, consumerism (xii) use of college of music, video, television, internet and other forms of electronic media (xiii) dystopian views and (ix) fabulation or pop fictions through hybridity of styles. It is
proposed to explore these characteristics of post-modernism is the novels of Shobha De – an obsessive – compulsive writer and columnist.

1.6 Themes and Techniques of Post-modernism

1.6.1 Use of Humour:
Use of humour in a literary work is very common. It has been present in every form as well as work of every era but many post-modern authors made it the hallmark of their style of writing. The World War II along with the Cold War affected the post-modern writers to a great extent resulting into their frustration. They tried to overcome their frustration in an indirect way by making use of irony, playfulness and black humour in their literary works. In fact, some of the post-modern authors made excessive use of humour in their works because of which they were labelled as black humourists. By using the humour in their works the post-modern writers could handle the serious subjects in a playful manner. One such example that bears this feature is Roland Barthes’s *The Pleasure of the Text*. The well-known work of the post-modern era is Heller’s *Catch-22*, though the subject of this novel is serious one and deals with a war situation, Heller using humorous language and situations made it light hearted to read. Another fine example is Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49*. Though it deals with a serious subject matter and through a complex structure, it reverberates with playful use of words.

1.6.2 Pastiche:
Pastiche means to combine, or "paste" together multiple elements. In order to bring out something new and special, many of the post-modern writers put together the elements of previous genres and their styles or by commenting on the writing of their contemporaries. This is one of the chief features of the post-modernists’ style of writing. It added extra
flavour in their works and by doing so they tried to make it more interesting and reader friendly. It included the contemporary problems and situations as well as conventional literary aspects. This new mode of writing provided techniques to the writers like William Burroughs who combined the science fiction and detective fiction. Similarly, Margaret Atwood mixed fairy tales in science fiction. The elements of detective fiction, science fiction and war fiction are mingled together by Thomas Pynchon in his works. In Robert Coover's 1977 novel *The Public Burning*, there is a mixture of historically inaccurate accounts of Richard Nixon interacting with historical figures and fictional characters such as Uncle Sam and Betty Crocker. It is a compositional technique like that of used by Burroughs, popularly known as the cut-up technique. One more example of the use of such post-modern technique may be found in B. S. Johnson’s 1969 novel *The Unfortunates* which was published in such a way that readers themselves had to collect it and assemble it according to their own choices, as it was published without binding and into pieces. This work had got the attention of the readers as well as critics of the time for its unique way of expression.

1.6.3 Intertextuality:

Intertextuality is one of the techniques of the writing which comes out by giving the work of art a kind of shape with reference to the literary work. The reader while reading and understanding the work of art needs to refer to the earlier work of art from the history that has been borrowed by the author while producing his original one. Without referring to such prior texts, the text is incomplete in its very survival. The term “intertextuality” has, itself, been borrowed and transformed many times since it was coined by poststructuralist Julia Kristeva in 1966. As critic William Irwin says, the term
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...has come to have almost as many meanings as users, from those faithful to Kristeva’s original vision to those who simply use it as a stylish way of talking about allusion and influence. (Irwin, William: 2004: 228)

An important element of post-modernism is its acknowledgment of previous literary works. The intertextuality of certain works of post-modern fiction means the relationship between one text (a novel for example) and another or one text within the interwoven fabric of literary history. Most of the critics criticised intertextual mode as a drawback in the writings of the post-modern writers. The critics believed that it proved the lack of the originality of the text and heavy dependence on clichés. The post-modern writers, on the other hand, were of the opinion that instead of treating such works of art as original they could be treated as extended pieces of the earlier texts or parallels to them or adaptations of the styles of earlier writers.

In post-modern literature this is manifested in references to fairy tales – as in works by Margaret Atwood, Donald Barthelme, and many other – or in references to popular genres such as science-fiction and detective fiction. The first writer who influenced the post-modernists as far as intertextuality is concerned is Jorge Luis Borges, whose work, *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote* makes a lot of references to *Don Quixote*. *Don Quixote* itself has many references to the Medieval Romances. One finer example of the intertextuality is John Barth’s *The Sot-Weed Factor* which not only refers to the subject matter but even uses the same title for his poem by Ebenezer Cooke. Often intertextuality is more complicated than a single reference to another text. Robert Coover’s *Pinocchio in Venice*, for example, links Pinocchio to Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice*. Also, Umberto
Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* takes on the form of a detective novel and makes references to authors such as Aristotle, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Borges.

In this way it was very common among the post-modernists to refer to the earlier masterpieces in their works. Though this technique was criticised by many critics, the writers found it effective to refer the earlier works. The most important thing was that though they referred to the earlier works they never lost their originality in style.

### 1.6.4 Metafiction:

Metafiction is writing about writing in order to make the reader aware of its fictionality along with keeping the presence of the writer alive. Most of the writing of the post-modernists reflects this feature. This technique is being used by the writer in order to keep a proper distance as a narrator of the story by avoiding the emotional touch. It has been also employed to allow for flagrant shifts in narrative, impossible jumps in time. Though the use of meta-fiction became popular during the modern and post-modern era, its roots can be traced back to the works of the ancient Greek writer, Homer and the fourteenth century English writer, Chaucer. Homer, in his *Odyssey* and Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales* employed the same technique. Following are some of the examples of meta-fictional literary texts of the twentieth century: *At Swim-Two-Birds* by Flann O'Brien, Stephen King's *Misery* and *Secret Window, Secret Garden*, Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, *The Counterfeiters* by André Gide, John Irving's *The World According to Garp*, *Alone on a Wide, Wide Sea* by Michael Morpurgo, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce, *Oracle Night* by Paul Auster, *More Bears!* by Kenn Nesbitt, and Cy Coleman's 1989 *Tony Award best musical, City of Angels.*
1.6.5 Historiographic Metafiction:

It is a term coined by Linda Hutcheon while referring to the novels that attempt to present the actual and historical events as well as characters in a fictionalised way. The best example of this could be Thomas Pynchon’s *Mason and Dixon*. Another notable examples include *The General in His Labyrinth* by Gabriel García Márquez (about Simón Bolívar), Flaubert's *Parrot by Julian Barnes* (about Gustave Flaubert), *Ragtime* by E. L. Doctorow (which features such historical figures as Harry Houdini, Henry Ford, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, Booker T. Washington, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung), and Rabih Alameddine's *Koolaids: The Art of War* which makes references to the Lebanese Civil War and various real life political figures. Thomas Pynchon's *Mason and Dixon* also employs this concept; for example, a scene featuring George Washington smoking marijuana is included. John Fowles deals similarly with the Victorian Period in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. In regard to critical theory, this technique can be related to the famous essay *The Death of the Author* by Roland Barthes.

1.6.6 Temporal Distortion:

Temporal distortion is a technique used by the modernist novelist as much as by the post-modernist writers. The post-modernist writers exploited the technique to its extreme. Fragmentation and non-linear narratives are defining features of temporal distortion. Temporal distortion in post-modern fiction is used in a variety of ways, often for the sake of irony. In this technique the writer may jump forwards or backwards in time, or there may be cultural and historical references that do not fit. For example, In *Flight to Canada*, the writer Ishmael Reed deals playfully with anachronisms, Abraham Lincoln using a
telephone for example. Time may overlap, repeat, or bifurcate into multiple possibilities. For example, in Robert Coover's *The Babysitter* from *Prick Songs and Descants*, the author presents multiple possible events occurring simultaneously—in one section the babysitter is murdered while in another section nothing happens and so on—yet no version of the story is favoured as the correct version.

**1.6.7 Technoculture and Hyperreality:**

According to Frederic Jameson’s logic, society has moved beyond capitalism into the information age, in which we are constantly bombarded with advertisements, videos, and product placement. Many post-modern authors reflect this in their work by inventing products that mirror actual advertisements, or by placing their characters in situations in which they cannot escape technology. For example, Don De Lillo's *White Noise* presents characters which are bombarded with a "white noise" of television, product brand names, and clichés. The cyberpunk fiction of William Gibson, Neal Stephenson, and many others use science fiction techniques to address this post-modern, hyper real information bombardment. Steam punk, a subgenre of science fiction popularized in novels and comics by such writers as Alan Moore and James Blaylock, demonstrates post-modern pastiche, temporal distortion and a focus on techno-culture with its mix of futuristic technology and Victorian culture.

**1.6.8 Paranoia:**

Paranoia is the belief that there's an ordering system behind the chaos of the world. This is another recurring post-modern theme. For the post-modernist, no ordering system exists, so a search for order is fruitless and absurd. Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, long-considered a prototype of post-modern literature, presents a situation which may be
"coincidence or conspiracy -- or a cruel joke". This often coincides with the theme of techno-culture and hyper-reality. For example, in *Breakfast of Champions* by Kurt Vonnegut, the character Dwayne Hoover becomes violent when he's convinced that everyone else in the world is a robot and he is the only human.

1.6.9 Magical Realism:

Arguably the most important post-modern technique, magical realism is the introduction of fantastic or impossible elements into a narrative that it seems real or normal. Magical realist novels may include dreams taking place during normal life, the return of previously deceased characters, extremely complicated plots, wild shifts in time, and myths and fairy tales becoming part of the narrative. Many critics argue that magical realism has its roots in the work of Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez, two South American writers, and some have classified it as a Latin American style. Jorge Luis Borges’s *Historia Universal de la Infamia*, regarded by many as the first work of magic realism. Apart from this, Colombian novelist Gabriel García Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth Graver's *The Mourning Door* are some examples of magic realism.

1.7 Post-modernism and Indian English Fiction:

The post-modern period of Indian English Literature is characteristically different from other periods because of the post-modern techniques used in the fictions. It has earned the status of the respected kind of literature world over. It was the wave of post-modernism which brought out radical changes in the Indian English fiction from 1990. In fact post-modernism was a continuation of modernism which was a revolt against the authority and significance. The only difference that categorises the fiction as modern and post-modern
could be the great Wars - the novels published after the First World War called as modern and written in the late 20th century, especially after the Second World War, as post-modern.

Even though most of the Indian writers were known to the readers outside India, it was *The God of Small Things*, by Arundhati Roy, that gave the true international recognition to the Indian English Novel. The earlier Indian writers (the pioneers in the real sense of the term) like R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Arun Joshi, Anita Desai and Shobha De had already earned recognition both at home and abroad. After that during the nineteen eighty and ninety, Indian English novel started growing with the writings of Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth and Shashi Deshpande. Presently, most of the Indian English Writers are at par with the authors of the international recognition and are welcome and read all over the world. They have created their own milestones in the writing of fiction.

**1.8 Indian English Novels in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century:**

Novel is a representation of the reality sometimes imagined beyond the reality by the author and depicts the complex structure of the society in its intricacy of motifs. The novelist attempts to understand and present the relationship between man and the society as well as environment with the changing emotions. A novel mostly reflects the contemporary society in its meaning and substance. Anita Singh in her article, “Indian English Novel in the Nineties and After” states:

> The literary values of a novel are often determined by a conjunction of subliminal and synchronous forces, which generate independently of the author, investing the surface story with a deeper social significance.

(Singh, Anita: 2005: 59)
The novel encompasses all other literary forms, having no limits concerning style or subject. The western novel was concerned with space and human beings’ relationships as the focal point. On the other hand, Indian novel in English began as a colonial encounter, which described tradition and experiences related to Indian society. Most of the novels in the early period dealt with the common themes like romance, sentimentality as well few dealing with the historical themes. The reason for this could be that the earlier Indian novelists were highly influenced by the 18th century English novelists like Defoe, Fielding and Scott. Through their writings, the Indian novelists tried to match their writings with the high standards set by these great novelists and considered them as their role models.

The novelists of the Pre-Independence era attempted to present the real situations of contemporary life resulting into more factual descriptions. They were highly influenced by the Gandhian thought and principles. The entry of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R K Narayan, in real sense, changed the scenario of Indian English fiction. Their writing gave true identity to the Indian English fiction by drawing the whole of the scenario and tradition of India.

*Untouchables* and *Coolie* by Mulk Raj Anand deal with the societal concern and throw light on the situation of the post Indian era.It was highly dominated by the Brahmin culture and suppressed the dreams of the downtrodden class. In his novels the marital relationships are visualised from outside. His *The Big Heart* portrays the abnormality of human nature. Ananta’s relations with Janaki have furnished the theme of romance in it.

As compared to these writers R K Narayan portrayed his male characters as vital to the theme and story and the female characters were given the secondary importance. In his *The
Dark Room, R. K. Narayan has shown that it is the intrusion of the other woman that has disturbed the married life of Savitri and Ramani. Raja Rao’s fictional world obviously has lacked the social milieu of Anand and Narayan. By using the conventional theme of love and marriage, Raja Rao presented the East-West confrontation in his works. In his Serpent and the Rope he has shown the difference between the Indian concept of love and marriage as different from the western one. In this novel Ramaswamy after marrying a foreigner falls in love with Savitri, an educated Indian girl.


Many of his female characters are victimized but later acquire harmony in life. Manohar Malgonkar produced his novels with the aim of providing entertainment to his readers. In order to reflect on the social situations, he shows his male characters as having upper hand dominating the female characters and shows them as instruments in the hands of men for masculine pleasure. His Combat of Shadows deals with the theme of love and carnal desire and presents the lustful relationship of Winton, Jean, Eddie and Ruby. In A Bend in the Ganges, Sundari packs her off with Gian to whom love is a skilful game. Khushwant Singh is a novelist who deftly paints the mundane things in his novels. M.K. Naik points out:
Khushwant Singh’s obsession with sex results in exercises in copulation involving major characters as well as minor practically in every chapter in *I shall not Hear the Nightingale*. (Naik, M.K.:1980: 220)

After this, many Indian English novelists appeared on the literary scene and explored the creative themes with diversity. Balachandra Rajan illustrates psychological realism and fantasy with the background of East-West confrontation in his fiction. The Indian ethos has been creatively reflected in the works of Sudhindranath Bose. On the contrary, G. V. Desani highlights the spiritual quest of human beings in accordance with the comprehension of the meaning of life. After 1950, the interest of many of the Indian English novelists has been seen shifted from the public to the private. For example, Arun Joshi projects the theme of alienation in its different aspects like self-pity and escapism. The East-West encounter has been exposed by Chaman Nahal in his fiction. K. Smitha in her article, “The Development of Indian English Fiction” says:

However the 1970’s was also the gestation period for the evolution in fictional technique and sensibility that was to occur in the 1980’s

(Smitha, K.:2002: 3)

The significant change in Indian English fiction has been registered by Salman Rushdie’s novel *Midnight’s Children* published in1981. It foreshadows the arrival of a new kind of novel that raises the Indian English novel at par with the European novel. Rushdie’s writing opened up new possibilities of form and content to the fresh blooming writers like Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Rahinton Mistry, Amitav Chaudhury, Raj Kamal Jha, Kiran Nagarkar, Ruskin Bond, Shiv K. Kumar, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Chandra and V.S. Naipal, etc.
1.9 Indian Women English Novelists of the Post-modern Era:

During the post-modern period the Indian English fiction was completely dominated by the Indian Women Novelists. The second phase of women novelists, belonging to the post-independence period attained a certain maturity in delineating socio-psychological problems of women showing a steady development from modernism to post-modernism. The novel of this period presented the whole of the Indian ethos that was reverberating with the elements of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. A host of Indian women English novelists like Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Santha Rama Rau, Nergis Dalal, Attia Hosain, Shakuntala Shrinagesh, Raji Narasimhan, Bharati Mukherjee, Shanta Rameshwar Rao, Kamala Das and Rama Mehta formed a sizeable school in fiction. The novelists like Jhabwala used irony and satire as weapons and mocked at the middle class life of the urban people. Her novels presented an idle and stupid but beautiful Indian girl who after marrying a snooty and colonial minded English emigrant comes to the city and faces lot many problems. A young man and woman relish the delusion of romantic love though they accept a separate arranged marriage in another novel, *To whom she will*. With regard to Jhabvala’s writing, M.K. Naik makes following remark:

> The most distinctive feature of Jhabvala’s novels is the subtlety and adroitness with which she unravels the gossamer threads of intricate human relationships-especially among the women in the Hindu joint family.


One of the most outstanding writers of the period is Kamala Markandaya, who explored the individual’s consciousness and projected the image of social and cultural change in her
novels. Her novels project the saddened side of life of the typical Indian family. Her novel *The Golden Honey Comb* presents the unsuccessful love story of the prince, Rabi and a slum girl in the city of Bombay. The love affair towards the end of the novel turns out to be just a fantasy for the poor girl. The other woman novelist, Nayantara Sahgal presented bold themes in her novels. Most of her novels portrayed modern Indian woman who is fed up of the traditional labels and looks for the freedom in sex. She also attempted to present the political scenario of the contemporary Indian situations in her novels. *A Time to Be Happy*, for example, portrays the traditional Indian woman, Maya who marries the anglicised Harish but later on gets trapped in extramarital affairs. Nayantara is known for her polished English and was more inclined to the politics related themes. She is more remembered for her command over English rather than her works of art.

One of the more popular writers of the time was Anita Desai whose works are completely different from the other contemporary women novelists. Whereas her contemporary women novelists were inclined to the political themes, Anita Desai depicted the psychic life of her characters, exposing tensions between family members and the alienation of middle-class women in her fiction. Her novel *Cry, the Peacock* presents the emotional incompatibility between the husband and wife. The picture of the East-West encounter, indulgence in sex, love and marriage are variously treated through the characters of Sarah and Adit in her another novel, *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*. Her characters in their attempt to maintain the individuality, suffer from the existential crisis. Santha Rama Rau is another novelist who in her *Remember the House* also reflects on the East-West encounter in the form of young Indira. Indira is shown as affected from adolescence to maturity. Nergis Dalal’s *Minari* explores the high class life of traditional characters at a hill station. *Two
Sisters, by her is a wonderful novel revealing the relationship between two sisters who are having prejudiced opinions about each other and so are grown up with the feeling of jealousy towards each other. Their personalities are portrayed as two opposite poles both physically as well as psychologically. Shakuntala Shrinagesh’s novel, The Little Black Box narrates a story of a rich woman who keeps struggling to herself in her psychological state of mind who keeps her money-box under her bed when she is in a hospital. Raji Narasimhan’s Forever Free has portrayed an interesting story of a young woman who is in search of fulfilment in life. The well read and discussed modern novelist is Bharati Mukherjee whose writing has been termed as immigrant fiction. Her novel, Wife delineates the picture of an exasperated Bengali wife, who suffers a sense of alienation in New York. Jasmine, her other novel, is a dramatic story of a Punjabi girl’s sexual escapades when she goes to the U.S.A. as an illegal immigrant. With the increasing trend of women writers Indian English novelists took the Indian values through their writing towards the globalised standards. To add to such list are the novelists with their prominent work are Shanta Rameshwar Rau’s Children of God, Kamala Das’s Alphabet of Lust and Rama Mehta’s Inside the Haveli. These writers after 1980 crafted the fiction with a meaningful portrayal to their credit. This popularity brought out a plethora of women writers upon the literary scene who offered an appropriate competition to the contemporary male counterparts in writing fiction in English and few of them even surpassed them.

The popularity of the Indian English novel can be realised in the words of Anita Singh who in her article, “Indian English Novel in the Nineties and After” points out:
Global communication technology, multinational capitalism and current configuration of the world system have altered conditions of production and reception of art. Indian English novels have thrown up new signs of identity, opened up innovative sites for collaboration and contestation.

(Singh, Anita: 2005: 88)

Most of the women writers of this period attempted to point out the true situation of the women’s life in the Indian society, the way she is treated by the upper middle class society. Most of the literary works depicted the women characters struggling for the self-identity and self-respect. Women were ill-treated by the upper-class society people and had become the victim of their status. Few of the prominent women novelists of this new age are Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Kavery Nambisan, Indira Ganeshan, Meena Alexander, Gita Hariharan, Manju Kapur, Dina Mehta, Anitha Rau Badmi, Chitra Diwakaruni, Jhumpa Lahari, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Nina Sibal, and Shobha De.

The first name is Shashi Despande whose *That Long Silence* is considered as one of the finest novels in Indian English literature. It talks about how the women characters become victims to their fate. *That Long Silence* portrays a middle-aged married woman, Jaya who lives a dull married life in a middle class home. The novel presents the life of a post-modern man who has silent suffering and life of boredom. Another remarkable work by her is *The Dark Holds No Terrors* that presents a story of a wife who dares to revolt against her husband. The female protagonist is a doctor who rebels against the male macho of her husband who is also a doctor by profession with her acute awareness. Most of the novels by Shashi Deshpande depict the unending hardships of woman in the society; *The Binding Vine* and *A Matter of Time* too are not exception to it. The women novelists who are known
for their boldness are Arundhati Roy and Manju Kapur. Both these novelists openly
discussed free play of sex, homosexuality and lesbianism in their novels. In “Women
Empowerment through Indo-Anglian Literature” Ashok Kumar rightly points out: “With
the women’s awakening and with the assertion of their rights they have also asserted their
right to their bodies.” (Kumar, Ashok: 2006: 30)

The most celebrated novel by Arundhati Roy that gave her international recognition is *The
God of Small Things*. It presents the way women are exploited and they become the victim
in the male dominated Indian society. The female protagonist, Ammu, is a high caste
Christian woman who is in love with lower caste Velutha. Velutha has to pay a penalty for
falling in love with a high caste woman who is a master of her body. Manju Kapur’s novel,
*Difficult Daughters* presents the mother-daughter relationship in a realistic manner. In
another celebrated novel, *A Married Woman* she has used a very bold theme and deals with
lesbianism which has gone beyond the limits of the Indian social code of conduct. Kavery
Nambisan’s novel, *The Scent of Papers* pictures a woman protagonist, Nanji, who
maintains dignity and individuality though she has gone through colourful drama of
everyday existence like countless women in India. She has to lead a very difficult life on
her own keeping her desires aloof and adjusting the life. Dina Mehta’s *And Some Take a
Lover* is the story of multicultural relationship. It is a story of a Parshi girl living in Bombay
who falls in love with a young Gandhian. Belonging to the different cultures, from her
lover, she has to go ups and downs in her love relationship.

*Sister of My Heart* is Chitra Diwakaruni’s well appreciated novel which deals with the
story of a middle class joint family in Bengal, where two sisters grow up together facing
the inner recesses of life in search of identity in her novel. In her *The Mistress of Spices*
Diwakaruni attempts to display the magic realism through the protagonist, Tilo, who tries to empower dislocated inhabitants of Oakland community by selling magical spices. As far as magic realism is concerned Suniti Nanjoshi stands out for her fantasy in women’s fiction in her works. Two of her novels *The Conversations of Cow* and *The Mothers of Mayadiip* depict the feminist Utopia. Nina Sibal writes on the similar lines. One of the popular novelists of the time is Aita Rau Badami, through her famous novel *Hero’s Walk*, a seven years old protagonist talks about the way Indian communities in the west have confronted the problems. Nandana, the seven years girl is wrecked in a cultural shock that her ancestors have experienced in Europe and America. Meena Alexander is known as an emigrant writer who delineates the problems of Indian immigrants in her novels. Her *Manhattan Music* deals with immigrants problems in U.S.A. The central character, Draupadi, who has never been to India and yet she has to struggle for her identity. Sumitra Gupta’s novel, *Memories of Rain* portrays the disastrous life of a young Bengali girl who marries an Englishman when he visits Kolkatta, but soon realizes his disloyalty towards her on going to England with him.

Jhumpa Lahiri’s novel, *The Namesake* is the best example of the novel that deals with the theme of migration and the problems created by the cross-cultural elements. The novel through the two generations of Indian-American family called the Gangulis deal with all those problems faced by the Indians who have migrated to America and struggle to get adjusted with the new environment. The first generation problems are presented in the form of Ashima and Ashok while their son, Gogal, represents the problems of the next generation. Namita Gokhale’s novels, *Paro* and *Dreams of Passion* throw light on Metropolitan society and the cocktail party circles in Delhi. Similar kind of theme has been
explored by Sagarika Ghose in her *The Gin Drinkers*. Through this novel, Ghose has exposed the pub culture that has become popular and social status among the urban middle class society. This novel reflects the trends of post-modern novel characterized by a surge of interest in the female body as a source of literary inspiration. The consequences of the colonialism and global issues of religion, race and nationalism have been well described by Kiran Desai in her *The Inheritance of Loss*. The Indian English novelists of the nineteen-nineties brought out experimentation both in delineating theme and form of the novel. M.K.Naik in his, *Twentieth century Indian English Fiction* rightly comments:

> The ‘new’ women novelists naturally share most of the preoccupations of their male counterparts, though in spite of what fanatical feminists would claim, they do have ‘a room of their own’ in the fictional mansion, in terms of certain pressing concerns and their attitude towards them.

*(Naik, M.K.:1980: 210)*

During the postmodern period the surging up of Indian women fiction writers in English significantly caught the attention of the world. As their writing delineated a variety of priorities and values bring out for them the international acclaim in the form of literary awards. These writers utilised their words against male macho prevalent in the literary world exposing the facts of interior and exterior world. It has been rightly pointed out by Meenakshi Bharat about the quality and strength of the women novelists in India asserts in a book entitled *Desert in Bloom* as: Confidence of a timbre never sensed before, has started coursing through their veins infusing a rare, hitherto never experienced vitality.

*(Bharat, Meenakshi: 2004:12)*
1.10 Place of Shobha De in Indian English Literature:

Indian English fiction is incomplete without mentioning the name of Shobha De. She occupies a remarkable place in Indian English writing. She has been acknowledged as a modern novelist for her art of unfolding the modern man’s predicament in her works. Unlike other writers’ obsession with the social political issues, De continuously tries to delineate the spiritual and intellectual journey of human beings. Her main concern is always being the place of woman in the context of changing cosmopolitan culture and human struggle for survival in the false concept of modernity and westernisation. Many a times she goes beyond the limit and crosses the boundary of sublimity as she chooses some of the vulgar aspects of human relationships.

Shobha De, born to an upper middle class family in 1948 to a district judge from small town Maharashtra, was educated in Delhi and Bombay. After completing her graduation in Psychology from St. Xaviers College, she started her earnings as a model. She entered the field of modelling against her parents wish and showed her courage to go beyond the choice of her parents. Later on she decided to go for a career in journalism in 1970 and paved her way to success. Soon she was appointed as the editor of the three popular magazines, 
*Stardust*, *Society* and *Celebrity* consulting editor to *Sunday* and *Megacity*.

Through her art of writing, Shobha De earned the name and fame as a free-lance writer and columnist for several upfront magazines and newspapers. Her initial married life proved to be unsuccessful and she had to take divorce from her first husband Sudhir and married Dilip De. At present, she is a free-lance writer and columnist for several newspapers and magazines.
There have been total sixteen books to her credit out of which seven are novels. Shobha De is known for her erotic novels. Even though her novels are overloaded with erotic themes and characters, they have immense literary values in terms of experimentation in the use of language and creation of Indian English idiom. Her first novel, *Socialite Evenings* was published in 1989. The novel presents the super-rich class urban society of India and portrays a middle class girl Karuna who evolves as a self-fulfilled woman in the Bombay socialite environment. Keeping her marriage intact, she moves on in search of unlimited freedom, developing extramarital relationships. Karuna never cares about the pain in order to keep up her identity in the society.

*Starry Nights*, the second novel by Shobha De, tells the story of a film star Aasha Rani. Aasha Rani though comes from a small town background moves to the sparkling life of Bombay. To achieve her aim, to become a top heroine of the film industry, she dares to break all the traditional shackles and grabs every opportunity. De has portrayed her character opposite to the traditional Indian woman who without any hesitation gets involved in extramarital affairs to reach her goal. Like a new woman, she does not hesitate to involve in a number of extramarital affairs to reach her desired goal.

Shobha De’s novel, *Sisters* reveals the picture of two corporate half-sisters, Mallika and Alisha, and their struggle to find self-identity in the cosmopolitan world of business after the death of their father, Seth Hiralal. L. Sonia Lingthoujam in her book *Image of the New Women in the Novels of Shobha De* observes:
Life according to these women is to be lived as they desire. They have money and power and anything else hardly matters. They hate men towering over them. They demand equality with them...(Linghoujam, Sonia L.: 2006: 36)

In her next novel *Strange Obsession*, Shobha De dares to use the theme which is supposed to be impossible in the orthodox Indian society. It depicts the strange relationship of lesbianism between Amrita Aggarwal, a budding model and Meenakshi Iyengar, a lesbian. The novel raises several questions related to the traditional marriage systems as well as so called normal sexual relationship between man and woman. She has also edited a book with Khushwant Singh, entitled *Uncertain Liaisons: Sex, Strife and Togetherness in Urban India*, which talks about the sex and sexual relations in modern India. Many of the essays in this book concentrate on the rapid changes taking place in the attitude of modern Indian couples as well as nexus between practice and attitude in the popular culture. The book also talks about homosexuality, heterosexuality, divorce and sex. Since De was closely associated with the Bollywood and has seen the extramarital affairs, some of the essays also focus on the dissatisfaction in sexual relations within Indian marriages. De’s *Sultry Days* deals with the woman’s search for self-identity in the male dominated society. In this novel, Nisha yearns for Deb but his new way of life creates repulsion and alienation between them. The novel presents a realistic picture of a distressed woman beats men at their own game.

*Small Betrayals* (1995) is the collection of short stories which exposes different dimensions of betrayal and conflicts among men and women. With this work, De tries to free herself from the label of pornographic writer and challenges the critics who have charged petitions against her previous novels.
De’s another novel, *Snapshots* brings out a very realistic picture of the urban women and their unorthodox life-style. The novel deals with six girls who are school friends and resemble the image of the new woman by giving a different dimension to moral issues in the society.

*Second Thoughts* the next novel by De discusses the story of a higher middle class Bengali girl, Maya, who has gone to Bombay after an arranged marriage with a foreign returned Bengali boy, Ranjan conforming to the principles of the society. Her arranged marriage proves to be a failure as she is unable to get fulfilled her physical as well as psychological urges. In order to fill up that vacuum, she gives a second thought by having sexual union with Nikhil. By doing so, she breaks the marital bond with Ranjan as well as the conventions of the Indian culture.

Apart from fictional works, Shobha De also produced a few non-fictional books. Her book, *shooting from the Hip: Selected Writings* is a marvellous collection of essays in which her keen observation and dissection of persons and events can be seen with a marked clarity. In this book, Shobha De has touched upon various aspects like politics, media, food, festivals, films, books, personalities, travelogues or articles relating to her city Bombay, which is a mixture of joy and sorrow. This volume also presents the first short story written by De. *Surviving Me* is the book by De which unveils the mysterious nature of men and their typical attitude in her perspective. The book reveals the typical attitude of men towards women, job and marriage system. It also attempts to give answers to the questions that are always raised in the minds of women about men and finally leaves a clever and controversial remark that both men and women complement each other to complete the
life. The book proves to be a kind of guide for the newly married women that teaches about fulfilling the man’s needs for the happy married life.

*Selective Memory: Stories from My Life* is another work that serves as a source to understand the intimate details of Shobha De’s life. De has portrayed different facets of an Indian woman in her novels without destroying the image of a woman. She never allowed her works to unveil the secrets of her life.

*Speed Post-Letters to My Children* is a book in the form of epistolary style consisting of letters written by Shobha De to her six children. It reveals undeniably the indefinable association between a mother and children. De has handled sensitive relationships with utmost perception by giving apt conclusions, which are very much related to urban families. It reveals about living and coping with the reactions of the exciting new world.

*Spouse: The Truth About Marriage* by Shobha De portrays a modern woman character as a life partner to a man living in the changing world of post-modern society. Apparently the novel expresses the author’s views about the role of life partners but at deeper level she also exposes the reasons behind failures of marriages. It is a wonderful representation of Shobha De’s keen observations as well as her own personal encounters in married life. She has also used her interactions with the married couples in real life situations. She interacted mostly with the married couples from the upper class society who gave out their opinions in frank manner and revealed their life as dissatisfied and full of compromises.

In *Superstar India: from Incredible to Unstoppable* Shobha De mentions popular opinions which are in wide circulation among the public in India. The way De writes in the columns about sports and state policies leaves the readers with indifference. In *S’s Secret* De portrays the character of a teenager named Sandhya. Again while describing her character
Shobha De has used very bold language and she is being described as too old for toys and too young for boys. The sole purpose behind writing such kind of nook could be that De wants to capture the minds of Indian children. The book also includes some of the burning issues like smoking, drugs, drinking and driving and so on. It is a book that De has promised to her six daughters for a long time.

The women in Shobha De’s novel have been portrayed in such a way that they appear to be vigorous and talented. But they are not compliant, leading a life of their own, aggressively violating the patriarchal norms of society. Tripti Karekatti in her article, “Theme of Sisterhood in Shanta Gokhale’s Rita Walinker, Shashi Despande’s A Matter of Time and Shobha De’s Sisters” states:

De, while striking a pose of an informed woman writer with a certain stand on issues of women, reinforces most of the orthodox patriarchal assumptions about women and their desires and needs. (Karekatti, Tripti: 110)

The woman of modern India in De’s novels is challenging and confident in reaching out to her goals in life. Through her works De tried to break the traditional image of a woman and portrayed her as rebellious and self-confident. Shobha De has been ranked among the first authors to explore the world of urban woman in India. The new woman in Shobha De’s novels is very much calculated about the mundane things and use ‘sex’ as means to become affluent and popular. Shivike Verma in his article, “The Novels of Shobha De: A Feminist Study” states:

Shobha De has raised sexuality as a weapon and as a problem for the women in the traditional Indian society. She feels that most of the problems of women are sex-oriented and sex-centered in the male dominated society.
Her women characters are free from the chains of husband and society, reactionary and rebel, and ‘new woman’ and ‘a liberated human being.

(Verma, Shivika: 2006: 192)

De’s women characters are all rebellious and in the orthodox society where sex is considered to be the personal thing and particularly women are not allowed to give their opinions about it have courage to raise their voice against the conventions of society.

Bhaskar A. Shukla in his article, “Shobha De: The Writer and Feminist” states:

Shobha De’s women are free about their sexual expression. They will not tolerate infidelity on her on the part of their husbands. All sexual taboos are broken by them with gusto. (Shukla, Bhaskar A.:2007: 211)

The image of new woman has been presented as composite figure by Shobha De. She has been presented as having physical freedom as well as all the feminine qualities simultaneously. She, along with her freedom, enjoys her career and marriage. Having undergone purposeless suffering; she fails to derive the real definition of life. Dr. S. P. Swain in an article, “Shobha De’s Socialite Evenings – A Feminist Study” declares:

Shobha’s women suffer in an androgynous world for they do not cherish genuine passions but only plastic passions which make them passive without a sense of purpose living in a frustrating world of anxiety, guilt, hostility, bitterness, boredom and resentment. These women cast off the conventional sense of morality, the old. (Swain, S.P.: 2002:137)

Shobha De’s women characters show vitality in having sufficient stamina to rebel against male chauvinism. They never bow down in meek subordination. They assert their actions
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though they are objected by their male counterparts. Pratibha Gupta in her article, “A Social Semiotic Study of Narratives” observes:

De’s style depicts new women in a mood of revolt. It undermines the old mythologies of gender relationships by questioning and revising them. They are challenging the stereotypes, fairy tales, traditions and histories that are prescribed plots of their lives and estimates their authority and power. She is now like a released, long blocked river sweeping away everything coming her way. And very often it has devastating effect on the society. (Gupta, Pratibha: 2004: 35)

Through her works Shobha De has made the Indian women realise their potentials so that they can face the challenges in the male dominated society. Owing to this, Dr. Ashish Gupta in his “The Androgynous World of New Women in Shobha De’s Fiction” makes an effective comment:

De has designed an atmosphere where woman is not living as a victim but not a victor. In her works, she has advocated rebellious sort of woman ready to revolt against established social taboos which tie her to behave as passive one and always be subjugated by man’s authority. (Gupta, Ashish: 2010: 4)

While depicting the modern Indian woman in her works, De has shown the negative side of her struggles so that she can get fulfilled her desires and aspirations. As a budding writer Shobha De used very racy and raunchy language but with the passing of time and maturity she tried to change her image through her later works. With regard to her works published in nineties she followed the genre of that age. The women writers of the 1990’s were self-dependent and tried to present the similar kind of image of a woman in their works.
Jasbir Jain rightly assessed the role of women writers in his article, “Towards the 21st Century: The Writing of the 1990’s”:

To come out of the postcolonial phase would automatically mark a shift in relationships, transforming them from dependent, subordinate ones to self-confident and equal ones. (Jain, Jasbir: 2002: 23)

What makes Shobha De different from her contemporary writers is her boldness in using and presenting sex liberally in her works. Her way of presenting sex in her novels proved to be shocking to the orthodox and conventional Indian masses. Due to her style in writing many of the critics attempted to marginalise her fiction but she, very successfully, brushed out their comments and continued with her bold themes and language. When some writers criticize her novels as obscene and controversial, she has answered boldly in one of her interviews to the Pakistan’s journal *Newsline*:

The only thing is that when you decide, or even instinctively, write something that is deemed controversial, you have to be able to substantiate what you are saying and have a track record of credibility. There has to be some sense of responsibility and you have to take what comes your way too.

(Interview to Newsline, 2)

Due to her bold and revolutionary writing style, De has been criticised and being allotted low rating for her fictional works. In spite of this, she never changed her style and continued to champion the cause for the Indian urban woman with her own attitude and style. Among many critics Dr. Ashish Gupta appreciates her for her writing in his article, “The Androgynous World of New Woman in Shobha De’s Fiction” and says:
One may not like everything in De’s fiction, but her treatment of the contemporary urban Indian woman’s challenges, predicament, values and life-style is surely not without significance. (Gupta, Ashish: 2010: 3)

Apart from such a wide criticism she has been welcomed and prescribed in many of the schools and colleges for studies. In fact, her first three novels are taken as course material by the school of Oriental and African Studies in London and some of her novels have been prescribed as syllabus by Mumbai University. Meenakshi Bharat in Desert in Bloom comments: “Shobha De has long been recognized as the financial spine of Penguin India” (Bharat, Meenakshi: 2004: 14)

Indian English literature has been known for the golden combination of tradition and modernity as far as production of art and literature is concerned. Through the literary work, they have created an ever shining mark in the minds of the art lovers. The interest in literature burnt the thirst of the writers which turned their efforts to innovate new form and style of writing.

In this way, it can be said that with near about hundred novels the post-modern Indian English fiction has created its own impact even at the international level. The post-1980 Indian English fiction, which is considered to be the post-modern fiction, brought out an Indian English idiom along with sexual frankness. Most of the novelists of this era seem to be attracted by the contemporary reality and the political scenario. Love, sex and life have been presented by these writers objectively and without any hesitation. While producing their works they have kept in mind the elite audience of the country as well as that of the abroad. Indian English fiction, especially written during the post-modern era, has brought out revolution in the whole range of Indian English Literature as far as the selection of
themes and language are concerned. Thus, it can be said that the Indian English fiction recreates contemporary society with insight and justness. It would be sensible to understand the nature and features of the Indian English novel of the post-modern period in the light of the words of Edward Said that post-modern novels are ‘in the world and about the world, hence, worldly’.
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