Chapter 1

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1.1 Introduction :-

Indian English Fiction has witnessed the introduction of new themes and techniques in the last two decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Indian writers have boldly experimented with language and techniques from their new found confidence. Most of these writers belongs to that section of society where English is used as a tool of social communication. Obviously the English language of these novelists is not formal, bookish and stilted. There is spontaneous flow in their use of language. The contemporary Indian English novelists have made a very evocative use of language by inverting and twisting it. The new generation of these Indian English novelists were writing in a live English which is capable for evoking the natural aroma of Indian life.

When we took at a glance towards the growth of the Indian English fiction we discern three important stages of its development. The first major and important thrust came in the mid- 1930’s at the time of the big trio- Mulk Raj Aanand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao manifested on the scene and started the real beginning of the Indian fiction.

The mid –1950’s and 1960’s points the second predominant stage when Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Arun Joshi, Anita Desai came in front of by changing the face of Indian English fiction. Initially the novelists Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, R.K. Narayan gave stress on the socio-economic, cultural world of the charachters. But with the new writers like Anita Desai, Arun Joshi, shobha Day, Nayantara Sahgal the inner world and the Psyche of the characters too become equivalent. The women novelists manifestation added a new aspect ot the Indian English fiction. With their feminine sensibility, they enhanced a new vista of human nature and mostly the man-woman bonding.
In the development of Indian English fiction the third important stage came in the early 1980’s. It was the predominant stage because after this period Indian English fiction received international recognition. In 1981 Salman Rushdie won the Booker prize for his novel- *Midnight Children*. In 1993 Vikram Seth was gifted a fabulous amount as advance against the royalty for his novel *A Suitable Boy*. Arundhati Roy’s – *The God of Small Things* brought the ‘Booker Prize’ in 1997. Jhumpa Lahiri received ‘Pulitzer Award’ and Shauna Singh’s *Baldwin* won the ‘Commonwealth Award’. Obviously this warm reception encouraged the Indian English writers confidence and helped them to create a firm base to stand up on. The most significant outcome of this development that these Indian English writers began to write with a new belief. Those novelists like Vikram Seth, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Upmanyu Chatterjee, Vikram Chandra, Manju Kapur, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande have emerged as todays reputed novelists in the world of Indian fiction.

This new generation of Indian English novelists are followed simple and straightforward but live English, which is capable for the manifestation of Indian society. The language has been explored and extended from their bottom of heart. Marudanayagam P. strikes the right opinion regarding this issue. He pointed out that-

*If Indian English fiction has arrived breaking through age. Old Indian diffidence and western skepticism. It is due to its abundance and variety, its superb handling of innovative techniques and last but not the least, its mastery of the English language.* *(1)*

It is always matter of the past that whether Indian novelists were really capable of using English for the creative purpose. Indian fiction in English has been considered deserving of consideration in India as well as abroad. As Bhabani Bhattacharya puts it-
The fundamental right of a creative artist to express himself in whatever manner he likes cannot be denied and the concept of creative freedom would include the medium of expression to which the writers out of his inner urge commits himself. (2)

The Indian writers have proved by the quality of their work that they can write effectively in English. The growth and development of Indian writing is no longer viewed with cynicism and skepticism.

The very contemporary Indian English novelists another achievement is that they have offered a new kind of subject matter thereby which is widening the scope and range of fictional themes accordingly. This fiction addressed itself to some social and political problems such as rising nationalism, politics of castes, religious reforms, status of women, the fight against traditional restraints during the pre-independence period and its approach was openly didactic. But the writing after that period means sixties onwards has introduced a vista of new themes and concerns.

During the early decades of the century feminism is not something entirely new to the Indian literary scene. The feminist approach seeking to interpret and evaluate experiences from the viewpoint of a feminine consciousness seems to have attained a phenomenal growth. Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore and Subramaniyan Bharati created remarkable portraits of new women.

But the contemporary novels such as – Nayantara Sahgal’s- The Day in The shadow and Rich Like Us, Arundhati Roy’s- The God of Small Things, Anita Desai’s Cry, the peacock, Shashi Deshpande’s- That Long Silence are obviously different from the earlier ones. In those novels the novelists has no longer glorify and extol women’s a lot or damn them with faint praise but picturised them with greater psychological as well as social realism and boldly
subjects the institution of marriage to an objective puzzled and critical examination. The close bonding between the smallest world of novels and the real world from which it draws its sustenance is essentially confusing and complicating. Although the novel are in the complex and self contained literary form, these novelists have taken up the challenges with commendable resourcefulness and competence.

1.2 Women’s Writing in Indian English Fiction:

Women novelists writing in Indian fiction projects the responses of more than half of humanity and effects a consciousness contributed by gender. It continues to occupy a place of importance for more reasons than one and questioned the existing viewpoint, which are essentially patriarchal. All women’s writing need not necessarily be feminist. But even though feminist interpretations can emerge through absence and negation. K.V. Surendran comments in relation with this issue –

_Feminism is a politics. It is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society. These power relations structure all areas of life, the family education and welfare, the world of work and politics, culture and leisure. They determine who does, what and for whom, what we are and what we might become?_ (3)

The earlier novels by the Indian female novelists including Raj Lakshmi Debi’s- _The Hindu Wife or The Enchanted Fruit_ (1876) and Krupabai Sattianandan’s- _Kamala_ - A story of Hindu life (1894) and _Saguna_ - A story of native christian life (1895). The first Indian woman novelist in Bengali named Swarnakumari Debi- her two novels of Ghoshal were translated into English. They were- _An Unfinished Song_ (1913) and _The Fatal Garland_ (1915). Apart
from her Santa and Sita Chatterjee wrote novels and short stories in Bengali and afterwards translated them into English. Those were *Tales of Bengal (1922), The Cage of Gold (1923) and The Garden Creeper. (1931).*

### 1.3 Indian Women Novelists- A Brief History :-

Indian women’s writing in English does not have a very long tradition. No writer carries forward a tradition which ‘she passes undoubtedly or unquestioningly’. There is bound to be a continuous dialogue with it, a testing as it were and also incidental departures, subversions and disruptions. This peculiar tradition starts from Toru Dutt (1856-57). She at a time when women were excluded from social discourse travelled to France and England and learnt both Sanskrit and French in addition to Bengali and English. Apart from Bianca, who also wrote a novel- *Le Journal de Mademoiselle Arvers* (1879).

The younger contemporary to Toru Dutt that was Krupabai Sattianandand(1862-94). She published two novels in the 1890’s *Saguna (1892)* and *Kamal (1894).* She represents the Indian tributary and constitutes the second stream in the tradition which was an indigenous stream. While the representations of Toru Dutt was a combination of Indian and European tradition. At the same time Bianca is related to the foreign soil and having a romantic approach, while Krupabai’s two novels emphasized on Indian issues of child marriage, women’s exclusion from both education and taking decision and goes on to discuss the religious conversions. The novels that followed, located and depicted themselves in between these two extreme flows of the writers who need to be remembered are Carendia Sorabjee (1866- 1954) and Sarojini Naidu (1879- 1949). Sorabjee’s memories were related with India calling while Sarojini Naidu’s poetry works through Indian legends and myths.

Above mentioned early Indian English women novelists- Krupabai Sattianandand’s *Saguna* received special attention with reference to Shashi Deshpande. The whole novel revolves around the protagonist, Saguna. She is
belongs to Brahmin family, who has recently converted to Christianity. It is the story that delineates the true picture of family relationships and woman condition in domestic situations. Another issue is depicted and that is women’s education which is at the central to the narrative. *Kamala*, the second novel focuses on a father-daughter relationship. In this novel, readers have experienced the tomboyishness of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s Shanti of Anand Math and also the girl child who is independent; self-willed and dare to violate the prescribed code of conduct. But later who quietly falls back into the orthodox and traditional image of woman. This novel has contain several sub-narratives and manifest the lives of her four friends named Bheema, Harni, Bhagirathi and Rukmini- which encourages to comments upon various social institution like marriage and joint family. Through this novel Sattianandan traces Kamala’s journey towards growing self-awareness and individuation in the prevailing social structure.

Kamala Markandaya, Shanta Rama Rau, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal are Shashi Deshpande’s immediate predecessors. In order to grasp and understand both the traditions and the departures from it; one must need to take at a glance towards the work of all these women novelists. These four novelists first work appeared between 1945 to 1963 and they are very different from each other. From amongst these novelists Nayantara Sahgal is the only writer, who continues to live in India and faced the consequences and reality of everydays life. Shashi Deshpande’s fictional work has nearby affinities with Sahgal’s concern.

Shanta Rama Rau is the earliest of these four novelists. She has written more in the form of travelogues than a fiction. The nature of the travelogues privileges her as a writer; because it allows her the freedom to observe to work through episodic, isolated events and to record immediate responses. Even though there is always a self-reflection which came out from interactions. In the novel-*Home to India* (1945) she is always conscious of the fact that she is
not a ‘real Indian’. It’s reason is due to a kind of alienation from distance and education has taken place. But the situation is little different in her later work *Remember the House* (1956). In this novel the father of woman protagonist is more attached with Indian traditions. She selects the choice of marriage for the security on two counterparts. First she is afraid of the inevitable dislocation after her father’s death; while the second one is she respects his feelings and expectations. He is always anxious on her count and perceives her as an ‘unfinished work’ that is the feeling of a typical Indian father. Actually it is an acceptance as a part of traditions. Jain Jasbir suitably remarked about it.

*We were given and we accepted, almost without thinking certain percepts. The importance of family the one we were married into........within our framework we would make our own happiness. It was never suggested that we pursue happiness.* (4)

The early publications of Kamala Markandaya and Nayantara Sahgal are witnessed in the fifties. These are the writers, who are very different in several ways. They depicted nationalistic concerns. Kamala Markandaya addresses the issues related to the poverty, hunger, despair, fear and often moves to the rural backgrounds. At the same time, she also uses urban spaces and described the East and West in an unequal relationship in several novels. The central concern in Markandaya’s novels is the power relationship. Novels like- *The Coffer Dams, Possession, Some Inner Fury and The Nowhere Man* are related with the same. These power relationships often upset or dislocate humanistic ideals. Another important theme that dealt by Markandaya is the conflict between tradition and modernity. She belongs to those women novelists for whom human relationships are of major concern. Even though she does not depicted intricate emotional turbulence. In her novels family is treated as a unit that faces the various problems of human existence.
Kamala Markandaya portrays a variety of women characters in her fiction. *Nectar in a Sieve,* her first novel depicted the life of a peasant woman named Rukmani, who confronted various consequences and odds like famine, infidelity, death and prostitution amidst a backdrop of bone chilling poverty. She constantly wages the battle of life. She wins reader’s sympathy by sheer hope like nectar in a sieve. Apart from *A Handful of Rice* (1966) this novel is delineated the plight of the rural woman in poverty, which is juxtaposed with that of the urban poor woman. In this novel Nalini, a careful girl slowly transformed into a tortured, harassed and victimized woman trying her level best to pull her husband and children through the poverty and miseries of a cold hostile life in the big town.

Another novels by Kamala Markandaya *Some Inner Fury* (1957), *Possession* (1963) and *The Nowhere Man* depicted the East –West man woman relationships. While two virgin gives us an in depth study of the problems of growing up into an average woman of an average family in the contemporary Indian society. Sarojini and Dandekar in *A Silence of Desire* (1961) combat between the double pulls of tradition and modernity, faith and rational thinking common enough grounds for the battle in Indian married life. In the novel- *The Golden Honeycomb* she deals with different status of women, those belongs to the royal families and sheltered under the princely umbrellas during the British Raj days. In all Markandaya’s novels, she always sets forth an inspiring goal of autonomy; which is necessary for the self-nurturing for the family and fellow feelings for the community of men and women.

Shanta Krishnaswamy comments perceptively on Kamala Markandaya’s contribution to the Indian English fiction and also to the strengthening of an Indian woman in general: -

*Although the author’s concerns are often socio – economic, although she being serious lacks the touch of humour and gentle*
The second predecessor of Deshpande in Indian fiction is Nayantara Sahgal. She wrote the novel – *The Day in Shadow* in 1971 depicted the rise of women’s liberation in the West. Sahgal unfolds the feminist position, elevates the consciousness and the critique of society with power and partition in this particular novel. Along with this novel preoccupied with the contemporary modern Indian woman’s quest for the self-realization and sexual freedom and also delineates the relationship between political and personal turmoil. In another words Sahgal highlights the umbilical link between the political and the personal matter. These two facets are brought together by the device of juxtaposition. Nayantara Sahgal’s another concern is the distress, sorrow that the woman feels after divorce and alienation in the Indian society which springs
directly from the existential predicament. Sahgal analyses her own married life in her own words, which is pointed out by Rameshkumar Gupta: -

For the first time I came across the shocking assumption of inequality. A man’s ego and ambition. I learned, must be served first. In case of conflict, the man’s will and desire must prevail........I was uneasy and restless adjusting to the demand of a personality and an environment whose goals and texture were different from anything I had known or been comfortable with. (6)

The disharmony and dissolution of marriage becomes one of the main concern in Sahgal’s fiction. The personal agonies and traumas are reflected through her writing. She explains her opinion related with the same issue-

Everything around the writer is material for a novel.........All one’s material comes from real life......... one generally draws on one’s own experience or someone else’s experience. The soil, which nurtures artistic talent, is the culture of the people, the taste, spiritual demands and life of the artist’s contemporaries. In other words the artist’s is only the co-author of a magnificent creation known as the culture of the people. (7)

Nayantara Sahgal shows her special concern with the problem of the emancipation of women. Through her novels she very suitably describes the expatiation of woman’s oppression in the Indian society keeps unfolding at several levels besides the awareness of female protagonists. As long as women continue to lag far behind their men-folk in all the spheres of life, political liberty would be meaningless. She firmly believes that in a truly egalitarian society. Social inequality and sex difference must be abolished. Women are also
individuals and they should have an equal say in all matters concerning them. The participation of national life has to be on the ground of their own ‘individuality’ and not as labelled possession.

She has been concerned not only with women but also with female aspect but also with women as are complement parts of men in the over all social set up. Her female characters are not race women treating men as their rivals in a highly competitive society. Rather they wish to relate themselves to the people around them and would like to be treated as equal.

In the fiction of Sahgal, the East-West relationship is not always placed in vice-versa. Instead of that the polarity is between those who have none. It becomes the matter of maxims or values as the personal and the political both overlaps each other. Sahgal grew up in a family that was the hub of the activity in the struggle of freedom and its own share of power in independent India. Another theme of the Sahgal’s novel is the exploration of the meaning of freedom in its multiple dimensions. Apart from that she is the first Indian woman novelist, who take up with conviction the issue of sexuality.

Jasbir Jain makes a perceptive remark on these two Indian woman novelists delineation of female characters and the issue of sexuality highlighten by them. She elaborates the comment that-

Markandaya’s woman characters experience, desires even illicit desire but it is contained through circumstances (as in Nectar in a Sieve), or delegated to a western woman (The Coffer Dams), seen as an awakening (Some Inner Fury) or condoned by accepted practice (The Golden Honeycomb) But it is Sahgal, who takes up the issue of rape (A Situation in New Delhi), a premarital relationship (Storm in Chandigarh), adulterous desires both in (Storm in Chandigarh and The Day in Shadow) and in novel after novel recognizes the importance of both communication and sexual
pleasure. There is an attempt to free woman from patriarchal control, to treat them as persons in their own right outside their biological and cultural roles. She also frees the sexual experience from a sense of guilt. (9)

On the scene of Indian English fiction another Indian woman novelist emerged on the early 60’s and still continues to occupy a pivotal place is Anita Desai. It is not necessary for her that the characters should serve the need of the novelists. She came in the focus once again when her novel – *Fasting, Feasting* got the nomination for the Booker Prize in 2000, ahead of the latest novels of the novelist Salman Rushdie and Vikram Seth. She wrote and published most of her novels in 80’s and 90’s. Those are *Clear Light of Day, In Custory and Baumgartner’s Bombay, Journey to Ithaska, and Fasting, Feasting*. They all shows her sensitive insight into her characters, particularly the female characters and her proper use of language to portray the inner psyche of her characters. In her very first novel – *Cry, the Peacock* she attempts to engrave the turbulent inner conflict of its protagonist, Maya. She caught in a neurotic condition, which is brought by a variety of factors including marital disharmony, barrenness and psychic disorder. Basavraj Naikar remarks about this situation-

*Consistent explorer of the inner life, especially that of Indian women convulsed by an acute sense of helplessness in the face of the onslaughts of an unfeeling world and the resultant mental agony*(10)

All these various novels in the act of exploring interior spaces, which express and confront existential loneliness. At a time, the outer world remains inaccessible as an excessive amount of space is these women novelists none of
falls into any single, definable pattern. They always experiments and open up stiff spaces and narrow down as the memories, which unravel the past.

Shashi Deshpande has inherited a tradition that is varied and different in some measure, if we juxtapose it against women novelists writing in other Indian languages. This particular aspect cannot be treated as a homogenous one. Each novelist has responded to the problems specific to her circumstances and other situations. Every female novelist has moved away from her predecessor to some extent. The truth is that it is the impact of their education, they chose to write in English in which they feels comfortable. Markandaya, Rau and Sahgal use it for a variety of purpose. Kamala Markandaya follows this language to describe about the tribal people, the peasants or the poor urban. Along with she uses this language to picturise the life in a village of South India.

Shanta Rama Rau moves in another direction. Her literary work is primarily related with travel and depiction of cultures. The discussion area in the travel books is more or less public space. Rau’s novels- Home to India and Remember the House explained the autobiographical material.

Nayantara Sahgal in her early novels especially A Time to be Happy does resort to a glossary and to delineates the description of Indian festivals and various ceremonies. She continues to write on more or less personal writings in her previous autobiographies. Prison and Chocolate Cake and From the Fear Set Free. These novels are largely middle class novels keeping with the lower classes on the periphery. In Sahgal’s novel- Rich Like Us picturise the crippled beggar, who is the symbol of struggle with the consequences of life. She encircles the margins very gracefully. She always acknowledges the presence of foreigners and of the controlling figures in politics and business. She handles these various concerns by using no bar of English language.

Anita Desai gives preference to the interior space. In her aticle- The Indian Writers Problems. She expressed her resentment towards the approach of the critics, who expected to write in their mother tongue.
According to the rules laid down by critics, I ought to be writing half my work in Bengali, the other half in German. As it happens, I have never written a word in either language.\textsuperscript{(11)}

Anita Desai expressed her opinion that the language chooses by her reluctant to talk about creative process. Similarly Shashi Deshpande also complains about a lack of tradition. She herself compares to the writers of regional languages. These mooting clearly indicates the necessity to place Indian writers writing in English. Related with the tradition of the writing in Indian fiction Jasbir Jain comments that-

\begin{quote}
The relationship between language and culture is an important one, but of greater significance is the ability to connect, to capture the image, the symbol, the myth and “this can be done in any language at all, only it must be done spontaneously, compulsively, subconsciously. ……That is what a writer’s existence is all about – he connects, he connects all the time he connects. It is a process that does indeed employ language, but also transcends it.”\textsuperscript{(12)}
\end{quote}

The most indomitable aspect of the contemporary Indian English fiction has been the novelists, who giving voice to the women’s sufferings, aspiration and assertion in a traditionally male- dominated society. Especially the women novelists are suitably analyzing the institution of marriage. This concern highlighten by women novelists, since marriage expects their total transformation on socio-cultural terms. These Indian women novelists are- Rama Mehta, Bharati Mukherjee, Dina Mehta, Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, and Shashi Deshpande. In all of these novelists many of them deliver an interesting array of female protagonists, who suffers within the framework i.e. boundries of marital institution.
Mostly in Indian English fiction political incidents in history is used as a main concern for a tale to examine thoroughly the human feelings and emotions. Indeed those are bold and a radical device evident to a large extent in Indian English fiction. It enables the novelists to present an individual perspective on that particular event and also to explore the whole social paraphernalia. The novelists like Manju Kapur and Nayantara Sahgal, to a large extent have twined together their true related incidents with the incidents of the past.

The novel- *Difficult Daughter* by Manju Kapur culminates with the partition of agony, whereas *A Married Woman*- finished on the note of mandir ……..masjid controversy. Nayantara Sahgal is also not exception for this aspect. She too interwined a plot with political events. The similarities of both the novelists are they try to explore the space or the scarcity of space that women occupy in family relationships. The character scheme and the narratives in their novels present a synoptic account of the conflicting ideological changes in those various momentous times.

Another novelist- Anita Nair’s novel – *Ladies Coupe* also raises the similar types of question related with woman’s existence; such as can a woman need a man to feel complete? Her novels are mostly reflected the various social atrocities which inflicted on women.

The wellknown Indian novelist Bharati Mukherji, born in Bengali Family and based in American ‘expatriate experience’. Bharati Mukherji has lived in the West, living as a school student first and later after marrying with Canadian. With Mukherji’s writing Indian English fiction turns to the West: the expatriate Indian shifting to a western country and forces the resultant conflict by an Indian woman. Mukherji’s first novel- *The Tigers Daughter* published in 1971 mainly depicts the East- West encounter from the point of view of an Indian woman. She always experiences the pull of Indian translation which are in constant conflict with western attitudes. Mostly in her novels the common
thread, is the initial hatred and later a successful effort to acclimatize oneself to the new society even though retaining one’s own personality as it is.

Gita Hariharan’s – *The Thousand Faces of Nights* (1992) and Bharati Mukherji’s *Wife* (1990) these two novels depicted the similar theme and that is of marriage both of their sense of individualism is so strong that they feel trapped in it. They enter into arranged marriages with unrealistic notion of life, love and obviously marriage. The protagonist of *The Thousand Faces of Night* ultimately returns to her maternal house leaving her husband as well as lover. While the novel *Wife’s* protagonist inner void and existential anguish transform into a neurotic with homicidal violence.

*Inside the Haveli* (1977) by Rama Mehta delineates the lives of Rajasthani women, who continue to live in Purdah. All the traditions and customs are followed by these women at the locate in Udaipur. The protagonist Geeta is a young educated girl from Bombay and gets married to Ajay singh, a professor of Science belonging to an old aristocratic family of Udaipur. Geeta is a girl with modern values becomes almost an outsider unable to live within the high walls of the haveli. She cannot rescue herself from the various customs and traditions of haveli which slowly takes her bound into their fold. The novel presents the isolation between man and woman inside the haveli. Thus Rama Mehta comments:-

> *But in the haveli men were regarded with awe as if they were the masters and their slightest wish was a command. Woman kept in their shadow and followed their instructions with meticulous care* (13)

The features of Indian women novelists writing has been moving with all its variations to a aspect where we find them to asserting themselves. The agony, suppression, sufferings of Indian women, marital isolation and
disharmony, existentialism, anger, dual traditions are some of their main themes which revealed through their novels.

1.4 An Author: Shashi Deshpande:

Shashi Deshpande is one of the famous woman writer in the field of Indian English fiction. She was born in Dharwad, Karnataka state situated in India and the daughter of the renowned Kannada writer and Sanskrit scholar Adya Rangachar known as ‘Sriranga’. He was the famous Kannada playwright and wrote plays based on various ideas. Shashi Deshpande was educated in Bangalore and Bombay and acquired the degree of M.A. in English from the University of Mysore, she also took degrees in Economics, Law and completed diploma in Journalism. At her father’s insistence, she began to write very late in her life. She got inspiration for writing and publication in 1969 by a visit to England on account of her experiences; which she experienced during those years. Shashi Deshpande express her opinion about the starting of writing fiction to one of her interviewer that:

*My husband was a commonwealth scholar and we went to England. We were there for a year. I thought it would be a pity if I forgot all our experiences there. So I started writing them down and gave them to my father. He gave them to ‘Deccan Herald’... which published them promptly. So it began very accidentally.

Then I was working for ‘The Onlooker’ when one of the subeditor said to me “why don’t you write a story?” So I wrote one- for a first story I thought it was very good- a somewhat Maughhamish kind of story. And then I wrote on and on as though I was crazed. There was no thinking or worrying about the theme, technique or publisher. I simply wrote.* (14)
The first collection of short stories written by Deshpande published in 1978 named *The Legacy and Other Stories*. Afterward her other collections of short stories are published one by one. Those are – *The Dark and Other Stories* (1986), *Nightingale and Other Stories* (1986), *The Intrusion and Other Stories* (1986). In these collections some of stories were later developed into novels and shares many of their concern. G.s. Amur comments in the preface of *The Legacy and Other Stories* that-

> 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.\(^{(15)}\)

Apart from the collection of the short stories Shashi Deshpande’s contribution by writing the novels to the Indian English fiction is as follows-

- *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980).
- *If I Die Today* (1982)
- *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983)
- *Roots and Shadows* (1983)
- *Small Remedies* (2000)
- *In the country of Deceit* (2008)

While Deshpande giving shape to her novels at the same time she wrote four children books.
• A sum Adventure
• The Only Witness
• The Hidden Treasure
• The Narayanpur Incident

With an aspect of extraordinary writing and achievements Shashi Deshpande created her own space in the field of Indian English fiction. The novel- Roots and Shadows (1983) was awarded the Thirumati Rangammal prize for the best Indian novel in the year of 1982-83. That Long Silence (1988) also received Sahitya Academy Award in 1991. Deshpande’s collection of short stories- The Legacy and Other Stories is included in the syllabus of graduate students in the University of Columbia. The novel – The Dark Holds No Terrors has been translated into Russian and German. She is as a reputed novelist of considerable worth. Like any great artist, she is not yet fully satisfied with what she has achieved till today. She told one of her interviewer- Geeta Gangadharan that:-

None of my books has so far realized my dreams of a good novel. I wish I will one day be able to write one such book which will survive the test of time. My best book is yet to come.\(^{(16)}\)

Shashi Deshpande denies any direct influence of any novelist in her writing work, even though she has acknowledged the lasting impression of Jane Austen and Bernard Shaw’s style of writing upon her. The gap in between Jane Austen and Deshpande is of 200 years though the similarity is that they both have same precise view for the details of the existence of feminine. Deshpande expresses her debt towards the other feminists such as- Betty Friedan, Simone De Beauvoir and Germaine Greer. However again she opined that they have not impact on her writing directly. She had already started writing when she first read their work. So naturally they didn’t impact on her work directly. However
they have contributed to her acknowledgement of the marginalization and socialization of women context.

Related with the influence, impact that shaped her as a novelist. She says that her father’s radical and sometimes liberal ideas played a vital role in shaping her outlook. She belongs from a Brahmin family even though her father neither allowed his children to state their caste nor did he bring up his daughters with prejudice and bias towards their gender. About her father and the type of upbringing she received, Deshpande express her opinion in an interview to the Vanamala Vishwanatha that-

... It was very untypical because of my father. He never allowed us to state that we were Brahmins... There... were elders in the family who could have introduced us to the rituals and rites of a Brahmins upbringing. So we had a very free and uncluttered childhood, a good upbringing. ...we started reading and thinking very early. I was a voracious reader. Another thing about my father was that he never made us feel conscious that we were daughters. He never bared us from doing anything we wanted. ................

He was a composite sort of person........ He was dominant, never domineering. On the contrary, if I should criticizes him, I would say he was somewhat detached from us... never guided us. May be if he had directed us at an early age. I could’ve done better. He never did that. He was a man of ideas- essentially cerebral, intellectual. Every play of his was about an idea, not about human beings characters. (17) 

1.5 Deshpande’s Main Issues and Concerns Included in Her Novels :-
The indomitable motif in Deshpande’s work is ‘silence’ and she is continuously trying to detect the ways of breaking through the deafness of make it heard. It clears her fictional work often handle the complex themes-loneliness, difficult love, loss, even violence, for example she has depicted about rape both within and outside of the marriage. The language used by Shashi Deshpande is often simple and stark. There are few embellishments and clever turn of phrases. It may be the result because she is very conscious of her decision to write in a language that is not her mother tongue. Interestingly she expressed her opinion that she select to write in English precisely because of its utilitarian value and possible to avoid floweriness.

According to the opinion of Deshpande- “every novel starts with people”. Therefore characters occupies indomitable place in her novels. In portraying the characters she has no any option. In her own words, she comments that-

*There are some, may be several choices in the techniques ..........*

*But not in the characters.* (18)

For serving the need of content Shashi Deshpande carefully avoided to creating wooden characters like puppets. It is not necessary for her that the characters should serve the need of the novelists. She excels in the portrayal of women characters as a novelist. She is however averse to sentimentalizing or idealizing woman characters. She remarked about this issue to Stanley Carvalho-

*My characters are all human beings one sees in the world around, No superman.* (19)

She gives preference to raise the real characters rather than creating a strong character. She likes to portray women as they are with their an inner
Deshpande has nevertheless created authentic female characters—flesh- and- blood characters with recognizable credentials. She has successfully delineated their problems and plights, yearning and aspirations, failure and foibles.\(^{(20)}\)

The main concern of the fictional work of Shashi Deshpande is the urge to detect oneself, to create space for oneself, to grow on one’s own. The another striking feature of her fiction is the recurrence of certain theme in them. But the predicament of women – specially those who belongs to educated middle class has been the pivotal issue that dealt with her novels.

1.6 Shashi Deshpande: Exploration Related with Feminism:–

According to the opinion of Shashi Deshpande, she herself get the best insights into her books, from the readers. The real meaning of literature is an intimate connection between the novelist and reader. Real Literature is must touching the lives of the people and the same done by her to a large extent. Deshpande’s fictional work has addressed several social issues of contemporary Indian society. A famous critic on women’s writing named Jasbir Jain comments about her fictional writing. She remarked that-

\[\text{Worked through historical and traditional context, explored psychological conflict and inner spaces, brought together time and space to create narrative meaning and has related to multiple literary translation of language, gender and culture. Yet the act of writing has more often than not been submerged into the fact of}\]
being woman. Deshpande’s time and again has observed that the two do not work within power relationships that neither of the two needs to be submerged or subordinated to the other. The relationship it is necessary to accept, is one similar to the relationship between form and content. The two function separately and when they come together in harmony in order to cohere. (21)

In one of the article titled Writing From the Margin, she describe about herself being as a ‘woman writer’. She depicted that-

The way I see the world is coloured by this fact of my being a woman, by historical and social circumstances of women’s lives. My themes, therefore, my characters and possibly, to a certain extent, even my language may differ from a man’s………

Nevertheless, when I sit down to write I am just a writer – my gender ceases to matter to me. I am concerned with the same problems of language, narrative, structure and continuity. (22)

Due to the various contemporary social issues related with women, Shashi Deshpande has been labeled as a feminist. But there is a timeless quality about her fiction and the universality related with that goes beyond the ‘feminist’ and ‘woman – centric’ tag her novels are often mistakenly makes her sadistic. She shares her insight with Vaahini readers that –

When you step into a writer’s shoes, your gender does not matter. (23)

The fictional work of Deshpande dealt with by the portrayals of the dilemma and predicament of the middle class educated Indian women, their
inner conflict, quest for identity, the various issues pertaining to the parent-child bondings, marital institution, sex, women’s exploitation, suffocation and their disillusionment. The publication of the novel - *That Long Silence* with the blurb proclaiming it by virago press made its own contribution to this belief. Deshpande remarked contradictory to her interviewer Geeta Gangadharan about whether she would like to call herself a feminist? She answered that-

> Yes, I would. I am a feminist in this sense that, I think, we need to have a world which we should recognize as a place for all of us human beings. There no superior or inferior; we are two halves of one species. I fully agree with Simone De Beauvoir that we are human, is much more important than our being men and women.” I think that’s my idea of feminism. (24)

At the same moment, she also urges to consider her work as an individual’s creativity and adjudge it without fixing it in the framework of feminist writing.

Shashi Deshpande admits to a small extent the influence of the western feminist writers. She remarked about it to one of her interviewer M.D. Riti –

> One never knows what influences one as a writer. I have read a lot of feminist novelists and understand what they are trying to say easily. However I began reading feminist idea right from the start. (25)

She has made it very clear that she has nothing to do with feminism in the narrow sense. She didn’t like to be branded this or that because the life is more complex rather with thinking about this issue her own enduring concern is only for human relationships. So certainly she do not think about her novels are a
man vs woman issues at all. Whatever skill hiding in Deshpande is only spontaneity related with her creative writing. She believes that good literature and propaganda do not go together. She only sympathizes with women, not because she too happens to be woman but also she wants to present the reality. Through her writing she only made attempt for the mirroring the true picture of the women’s inner world.

The concerns of Deshpande for Indian women must be necessarily considered in the indigenous light. She has very aptly distanced herself from the context of western feminism and likes to remain herself only in the folds of Indian context. R.S. Pathak appropriately remarks:

*Arbitrary appellations and dragging her work into the fold of militant feminism of the western variety would be unjust.*

*Both the awareness of women’s position in society as one of disadvantage or inequality compared with that of men and also a desire to remove those disadvantages.*

*According to Alice Jadine, feminism is a movement from the point of view of by and for women.*

According to this opinion the real meaning of feminism is cleared. It surfaced in the western world as a movement in support of the same rights and opportunities for women as for men. Deshpande has delineated the contemporary women those belongs to Indian society. With inner psyche, conflicts, her efforts to quest her identity, to preserve her identity as daughter, wife and mother and above all as a human being in the orthodox male dominated Indian society. The plight of Indian woman is a part of general human predicament still her experience is significantly more intense. The
differences in male and female experiences and their expressions in literature are totally different, about this issue Virginia Woolf comments that-

There is the obvious and enormous difference of experience in the first place; but the essential difference lies in the fact not that men described battles and women the birth of children but that each sex describes itself. (27)

The fiction written by Shashi Deshpande contains various issues and concerns that can be regarded as the material of feminist thoughts viz – the role of the gender, women’s sexuality, quest to understand own identity and so on. But even though she can be recognize as a ‘feminist’ only in specific sense. She throws significant focus on her stance in her interview taken by Lakshmi Holmstrom –

I now have no doubts at all in saying that I am a feminist. In my own life, I mean. But not consciously, as a novelist. I must also say that my feminism has came to me very slowly, very gradually, and mainly out of my own thinking and experiences and feelings. I started writing first and only then discovered my feminism. And it was much later that I actually read books about it. (28)

According to the viewpoint of Deshpande no amount of theorizing will solve the problems of women specially in the Indian context. About this issue further she comments that-

But to me feminism isn’t a matter of theory : It is difficult to apply Kate Millett or Simone De Beauvoir or whoever to the reality of our daily lives in India. And then there are such terrible
misconceptions about feminism by people here. They often think it is about burning bras and walking out on your husband, children etc. I always try to make the point now about what feminism is not, and to say that we have to discover what it is in our own lives our experiences. And I actually feel that a lot of women in India are feminists without realizing it. (29)

About feminism Deshpande’s approach is highly sensible approach. She did not like to be a hard-core feminist and is not ready to receive that being as a daughter, wife and mother is something that is unnecessarily imposed on a woman. According to her attitude “It’s needed” but “with a greater sense of balance”. So sometimes she feels that she is trapped in the world of women. About this aspect she express her opinion that –

\[\text{Maybe I want to reach a stage where I can write about human beings and not about women or men...for I don’t believe in having a propagandist or sexist purpose to my writing.} \]

(30)

Deshpande expresses her serious thoughts about the literature written by women novelists and concerned seriously with the issues related to human predicaments in one of the article named – ‘The Dilemma of the Woman Writer’s’. Again through this article she has talked about the tendency of the critic’s label this literature categorizes it and dismisses its serious concern. In her own words she comments-

\[\text{A woman who writes of women’s experiences often brings in some aspects of those experiences that have angered her, roused her strong feelings. I don’t see why this has to be labeled feminist}\]
fiction. A (male critic) said about a novel of mine: she can be quiet brilliant when she is not raising her banners of protest. Any woman, who writes fiction shows the world as it looks to her protagonist; If the protagonist is a woman she shows the world as it looks to a woman. This view, I have realized makes a man quiet uncomfortable. But to present this view point is not necessarily to be a feminists. It seems that it is, on the whole difficult for a woman to be judged purely as a writer. To the critics one is a woman writer. I know literature has to be valued in the social context; but to apply the tag of feminist is one way- of dismissing the serious concerns of the novel by labeling them, by calling the work of propagandist.

It’s like saying that when a man writes on the particular problem a man is facing, he is writing male propaganda. Nobody says that – why is it said only about women writers? (31)

She raises a very mentioned plausible question in defence of her argument. She has a very sincere and straightforward view about women’s writing. She is having idea that is developing through various phases and one will lead to another. According to her what matters finally is obviously-‘sincerity, integrity and nothing but professionalism.’ She puts this ideas in following way-

It seems to me however, that one has to go through this phase of anger. Even if such writing is tainted, it has its place as leading on to something else. All this kind of writing feminist, humourous, pornographic – has its place in women’s writing as it has in writing by men. For women particularly, after so many years of silence, there is bound to be some exaggeration, some
extravagance. It’s like letting a youngster loose in the world, after years of strict discipline. Women have every right to express themselves in any way they want to what matters in their writing as in the writing of men, is sincerity, integrity and professionalism. (32)

Another important issue revealed through her fictional work is the suppressed anger and bitterness of her female protagonists towards their bodies. The female characters hate their bodies, responses and reactions. In Deshpande’s novels there is revulsion to the normal physical functions such as menstruation, pregnancy, procreation which decreases women to the level of just breeding machine. About this issues she expressed her harsh remark in one of her interview to the Geeta Gangadharan that –

I have a very strong feeling that until very recently women in our society have been looked upon just a ‘breeding animals’. They had no other role in life. I have a strong objection to the treating any human being in that manner………

The whole chronology of their life centers around childbirth ………. The stress laid on the feminine functions, at the cost of all your potentials as an individual, enraged me………. may be too much or thinking has made me express a sort of dislike for the purely physical aspects of feminine life. Making it seem as if I am totally against all feminine function, which is not the true at all. (33)

Deshpande is at her heart a realist, despite imaginative flashes and the role played by memory in her novels. She likes to present a plausible story of authentic characters and not shadowy abstractions- ‘airy nothing’. Realism. – Engles implies as-
Besides truth of details the truthful representation of typical circumstances. She believes in presenting life as it is and not as it should be. (34)

Shashi Deshpande observes this kind of realism in her novels. So naturally here rightly feels of the India in 80 S. R. S. Pathak observes in the fictional style of Shashi Deshpande that-

Anything like this is yet to happen in Deshpande’s fiction, not withstanding anatomical descriptions and detailed specifications in her short stories, but the absence of total reticence in this respect in her novel is a proof of the novelist’s comprehensive, understanding of the grassroot reality and woman’s plight in India ..... the novelist has raised some significant questions pertaining to the position of women in society and gender issues. (35)

The various critics are depicted an indomitable feature which must be present in each novelist – like it is very important thing that the novelist has not ignored body and its demands. As Michel Foucault exemplified that-

Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power holds in check....... it is the name that can be given to a historical construct : not as a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasure, the incitement to discourse .....are linked to one another. (36)

It is the prominent time that we should understand a woman very much properly. Related with this issue Raman Seldon comments-
The time has come when woman’s “body must be heard” and “woman must uncensor herself, recover her goods, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal. She must throw off her guilt……. (37)

1.7 Family : A Sociological Attitude :-

Deshpande gives importance to another factor in her fiction and that is nothing but ‘family’. For her female protagonists family becomes the centre of all various activities which may be good or troublesome. It is a source of support and strength as well as animosities and anxieties. According to her opinion family happens to be a very much fundamental institution of Indian society. Preliminary education is imparted only through the medium of family. The definition of ‘Family’ is defines by Murdok as –

A social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction. It includes adult of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted of the sexuality co-habiting adults. (38)

Another definition of ‘family’ is defines by Ross. He explains that- A family includes physical, social and psychological elements of the life of family members. According to this opinion, it is one type of group of people usually related as some particular type of kindered who may live in one household and whose unity resides in a patterning of rights and duties, authorities and sentiments.

In context of the fiction of Shashi Deshpande the intricate web of family member relationships plays a predominant role. At the same time she provides a synoptic account of the factors those are responsible for the conversion of a
joint family into a nuclear family. Naturally this disintegration indirectly impact on the roles of gender and also assaults the strong and magnetic bonding of relationships. The predominant feature of Deshpande’s novels is to explore the human psyche and mystifying the nature of relationship with the help of family. She always preoccupied with the interpersonal relationships and emotions of her characters. So the development of her novels is happens to by exploring the inter-relationships and also relationships maintained with society. Generally through her novels Deshpande delineates the bonding and relationship between husband and wife and afterwards the dilemma and conflict due to some complexities.

Frequently the term ‘extended family’ is used instead of joint family which means the combination and collaboration of two or more elementary families based on an extension of the parent –child relationships. The composition of joint family is states by prof. Irawati Karve -

There are three or four generations of males related to a male ego as grandfather and his brothers and cousins, sons and nephew and wives of all these male relatives, plus the ego’s own unmarried sisters and daughters. (39)

1.8 Family : Shashi Deshpande’s Concern :-

Every individual gets support during the consequences, natural calamities only through the brotherhood. Through the fiction of Shashi Deshpande she depicts the importance, the pivotal role of this brotherhood, which shares and if necessary protect the person during the ups and down of the life. But this shield of the protection, support for an individual is slowly lost nowadays due to the disintegration of joint family into nuclear family, which comprises only of husband, wife and their children. An absence of one exposes the family to all sorts of pressures. In an Indian context flow from the joint family towards
nuclear family is severely criticized. But Shashi Deshpande did not prefer to criticize on this peculiar issue, rather than she presents the various consequences of this disintegration. She exemplified the insecurity and loneliness due to which the disintegration of family arrives. She thinks that human relationship, human bonding is the indominate asset of humanity, that is known as the real bonding, the real relationship. In one of her interview she express her opinion related with this issue-

_We know a lot about the physical and the organic world and the universe in general, but we still know very little about human relationships. It is the most mystifying thing as far as I am concerned. I will continue to wonder about it. And still find it tremendously intriguing, fascinating._ (40)

In consideration with this, Deshpande further expect that every human being, living creature has to live within bondage of their own selves and there is no other way. While talking to one of her interviewer- Vanamala Vishwanatha, She emphasized that –

_It's needed It is necessary for women to live within relationship. But if the rules are rigidly laid that as a wife or mother you do this and no further, then one becomes unhappy. This is what I’ve tried to convey in my writing._ (41)

As per the emphasis of Shashi Deshpande it is clear that these various relationships are only responsible for the enhancement of human bonds and bondings which are essentially stronger than an iron chain.

### 1.9 Illumination : About the Research Topic :-
Shashi Deshpande is one of the most renowned woman writer in the field of Indian English fiction. She always prefers to escape from being branded for, because she thinks that her work projects her prime concern. She portrays her struggle to adjust herself in the orthodox Indian society. Deshpande very properly picturises the various factors those are responsible for the imbalance and the loss of sharing between husband and wife. But in spite of all various consequences the protagonist of the novels of Deshpande emerge out of it with a new in debth understanding of human nature.

1.9.1 Need and Importance of the Research Topic:-

The Sahitya Academy Award winning novelist, Shashi Deshpande is one of the reputed novelist in the field of Indian English fiction. She successfully attempts to present multi-dimensions of major and minor relationships existing in a family and with the society. Her language projects an external settings with every minute detail and explores the dark corners of the inner psyche of the characters which are delineates by her. All the novels of Shashi Deshpande reveals with an impending crisis that revolves around her protagonist. One of the predominant facet of her writing technique is that she has portrayed the real educated middle class woman bound with her womanhood and with her family. She happens to be at the centre of the most important social institution and that is of her family.

Shashi Deshpande’s female protagonists are bound to each other not only by formal relationship but also one of the invisible bond- that of womanhood. These protagonists and other women characters knows each other, understands and try to positively encourage the others with the bond of being woman. They likes to comes to know the agony, pains, sufferings, humility of other women in a different consequences whether inside the house and in outer world. Thus, wherever possible these women supports to one another zestfully. These various dimensions –braveness, love, caring, sharing and understanding experiences which comes from within for the other characters without any artificialness.
This understanding of the pain, agony and sufferings of womanhood seems to be one of the prevalent and emphatic issue projected through Shashi Deshpande’s fiction.

This prevalent and emphatic aspect of Deshpande’s novels is most preferable that’s why the topic is selected for this present research work entitled-

**A Study of Woman Bonding with Womanhood in the Selected Novels of Shashi Deshpande.**

1.9.2 Objectives of the Research Work :-

i) To study the various literary facets of the personality of Shashi Deshpande.

ii) To study the style of weaving plot of Shashi Deshpande through her novels.

iii) To study the nature and various issues of Deshpande’s fiction.

iv) To study the woman bonding with womanhood from Shashi Deshpande’s novels.

v) To study the conflict between an old and new generation in Deshpande’s novels.

vi) To study the quest to understand exchanged role-relationships of the woman characters through her novels.

1.9.3 Methodology of the Research Work ;-

**Explorative Research Method:**

- For the survey of the reference material related with the various issues that are depicted by Shashi Deshpande
• For the investigation of the critical and analytical articles through the research journals and e-library related with the research topic.
• To obtained the detail information about the novels of Shashi Deshpande, her personal experiences, opinion, emotions, feelings related with the various issues of female characters through her published interviews.

1.9.4 Scope and Limitations of the Research work :-
• The selected five novels of Shashi Deshpande – *That Long Silence*, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *Roots and Shadows*, *A Matter of Time*, *The Binding vine* are analysed through this research work.
• The pivotal aspect- Woman bonding with womanhood is analysed with the help of this research.
• Shashi Deshpande’s protagonists quest to understand exchanged role relationship is studied through this peculiar research.
• The conflict between old and new generation also exemplified with the help of this research.
• The various familial relationships of women character belongs to these selected novels also examined in the particular research work.

1.10 Conclusion :-

Thus, through the means of this chapter an attempt is made to depicts the theoretical background of this particular research work, on which it is based. The efforts are made for to taken glance at the brief history of Indian English fiction, women novelists in India, about the author – Shashi Deshpande, her major concerns, an opinion about feminism and her maxims about various relationships and last but not least her attempt to delineates the
pivotal aspect of woman bonding with womanhood in a fine way. Therefore it is cleared with the help of furnished chapter, woman bonding with womanhood in the selected novels of Shashi Deshpande is the basic pillar of this research work.
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