CHAPTER – I

INDIAN NOVEL IN ENGLISH : PAST AND PRESENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

At the initial stage, the term “Indo-Anglian” was used to describe the original creative writing in English by the Indians. It is the literature written by the Indians whose mother-tongue is not English. According to K.R.S. Iyengar (1973:11) there are three types of Indian writers in English, first, “those who have acquired their entire education in English schools and universities. Secondly, Indians who have settled abroad but are constantly in touch with the changing surrounding and traditions of their country of adoption. And finally, Indians who have acquired English as a second language.” Consequently, a large number of Indians were greatly moved by the genuine desire to present before the western readers an authentic picture of India through their writings.

However, there were some writers such as Michael Madhusudhan Dutt and Romesh Chandra Dutt, who were persuaded not to write in English, but to write in their mother-tongue Bengali. But many Indian writers had chosen English as their medium of expression and made their names in different fields of literature, for
example, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote his *Autobiography, Glimpses of World History* and *Discovery of India* in English and not in Hindi. Similarly, Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu and Sri Aurobindo wrote in English and not in Bengali. They used English to represent the Indian culture and spirit. In this connection, the remarks of Randolph Quirk and Raja Rao, are of worth quoting. According to Quirk, English is not the private property of the Englishmen. Similarly, Raja Rao says in the Preface of his novel *Kanthapura* (1938, rpt. 1971: 5) “One has to convey in a language that is not one's own, the spirit that is one's own.” It seems that the mother-tongue did not impede their way in writing in English. Commenting on the use of English by the Indians as the medium of writing and expression, James H. Cousins (1918: 179) says, “… If they (Indians) are compelled as an alternative to writing in their own mother-tongue, let it be not Anglo-Indian, but Indo-Anglian, Indian in spirit, Indian in thought, Indian in emotion, Indian in imagery and English only in words….” In this regard, R. K. Narayan, as pointed out by K.R.S. Iyengar (1973: 30) says : “… I am able to confirm, after nearly thirty years of writing, that English has served my purpose admirably.” This is how with a rich contribution to prose, poetry, novel and drama, these writers have made Indo-Anglian literature as a matter of pride to Indians and a source of admiration to the foreigners.
Besides this, Lord Macaulay’s *Minutes* on Indian education in 1935 and Lord Bentinck’s decision to promote European literature and science among the Indians instigated the Indians to use an alien tongue for creative expression. Inspired by this policy, a few Indians from the English-educated elite class such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu were stimulated to use English for creative expression. They realised that by using English, they could reach pan-India and even to the world audience. Thereafter, the Indian writers in English accepted English as a medium of expression for political and cultural reasons. Some Indian writers such as Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Nissim Ezekiel and Jayant Mahapatra have adapted English to communicate Indian sensibility.

From the historical perspective, Indian English literature has passed through several phases such as Indo-Anglian, Indo-English, Indian Writing in English and recently Indian English literature. Now it is a part of commonwealth literatures in English. This new literature in English is regarded as an important component of world literature. Inspite of diverse cultures, races and religions, it has successfully recaptured and reflected the multi-cultural society. As a result, it has created a widespread interest both in India and abroad.
Yet, one cannot deny the fact that the Indian literary culture has been fragmented into several regional languages as the creative writers in India have been writing in regional languages such as Hindi, Kannada, Marathi, Punjabi, Bengali etc. Therefore, Indian literature has become pan-Indian. As a matter of fact, no one can overlook the contribution of regional literatures to Indian English literature and vice-versa. But for the makers of Indian English literature, English is the language of the expression of their creative urge.

1.2 DEVELOPMENT OF INDIAN NOVEL IN ENGLISH

The possible literary form for a writer to keep himself always in touch with the common readers is the fiction. It is in this area we find that the Indian writers in English have made the most significant contribution. So, of all genres, the novel is the most popular form today. According to H. M. Williams (1976: 109), “It is undoubtedly the most popular vehicle for the transmission of Indian ideas to the wider English speaking world.” We in India, on a greater extent are indebted to the European and English novel because as an art form, it has been imported to India from the West. In other words, it is a gift of Western literature.
In the nineteenth century with the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s *Rajmohan’s Wife* (1864) and Lal Behari Day’s *Govind Samanta* (1874), Indian novel in English has grown by leaps and bounds in respect of thematic variety and linguistic maturity. Both of them have used an acquired language to comment on the Indian social context. But compared to the recent output, most early novels in English were almost imitative and faulty. It is assumed that Indian novel in English has its roots in the nineteenth century realistic tradition of English novel. The impact of English education, national awakening and the influence of European models are the chief factors responsible for the rise and development of Indian novel in English. But with the passage of time the Indian novel in English has become thoroughly Indian in terms of the themes, techniques and the human values. In this regard, Meenakshi Mukherjee (1985: viii) observes that:

The novel in India can be seen as the product of configurations in philosophical, aesthetic, economic and political forces in the larger life of the country. Despite obvious, regional variations, a basic pattern seems to emerge from shared factors like the Puranic heritage, hierarchical social structure, colonial education, disjunction of agrarian life and many others that affect the form of novel as well as its content.
In order to understand rise and development of Indian English Novel it is necessary to take into consideration its emergence, developing stages and continuing traditions. The Indian novel in English has been divided into three successive periods such as: a) novel from 1875 to 1920, b) novel from 1920 to 1947, and c) novel from 1947 onwards, by the Indian scholars like K.R.S. Iyengar (1962), M.K. Naik (1982) and Meenakshi Mukherjee (1985), considering the socio-political changes in India before and after the Independence. On the other hand, the classification of the novel by P. K. Rajan (1995: 9) refers to a) Early Realism: From 1864 to 1935, b) Critical Realism: From 1935 to the 1960’s, c) Modernism: From the 1960s to the 1980s, and d) The New Novel: From 1981 onwards. However, such classification has its own limitations as placing an individual writer in a specific period creates several problems. Besides an individual writer practices several literary modes and values of representation at the time of writing. Hence, the whole corpus of Indian novel in English may be divided into three broad groups:

a) The traditional novel of social realism before Independence.

b) The modern novel of experimentation after Independence.

c) A new contemporary novel since 1981.
The intellectuals in India before Independence concentrated on the national awakening and the society in a realistic manner. Bengal seems to be the source of the Indian novel in English for the prominent pioneers of the nineteenth century were upper-class Bengali writers, for instance, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Toru Dutt, and Rabindranath Tagore, who dealt with the social problems within their reach. These writers were not merely the imitators of the West but they had in the words of Meenakshi Mukherjee (1971: 19), “direct involvement in values and experiences which are valid in the Indian context.” The pioneer novelists were trying to establish a new sense of social morality in place of the age-old social values. They were social reformers and with them, the novel became an exercise in social realism.

The Indian novelists in English have their roots in two traditions – the Indian and the Western. It was a challenge for them to express distinctly an Indian sensibility in an acquired language. Though the novels were being written in the regional languages, for instance, in Bengali, Hindi, Marathi and Malayalam, they had no English tradition. Naturally, at the formative stage, the Indian writers were greatly influenced by the European masterpieces of Tolstoy, Balzac and Dostoevsky in English translations. There was a great impact of the novels of the romantics and the early Victorians. Yet
they were not the blind imitators of the Western models. On the other hand, they tried to establish their own tradition of novel writing in accordance with the age-old Indian tradition of story telling.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s only novel in English *Rajmohan’s Wife* laid down the foundation for the first generation novelists to record the rich heritage and social transformation in India. Both the male and female novelists who emphasized their personal and private experiences followed him. The early novels were, therefore, sketchy, domestic and aloof from the political happenings. The early novelists depicted rural and domestic life, filled with superstitions and religious whims, with an equal emphasis on morals and social ills. In spite of that their creative efforts were very poor. The deeper issues of national as well as human life do not enter into their novels. The women writers wrote about nubile romances and marital maladjustment and their male counterparts wrote about social issues. None of the women novelists was as great as Jane Austen, George Eliot and Bronte sisters. However, their world was different from the socio-ethical world of the British novelists. The early novelists in India imitated the Western novel in respect of plot-construction, characterization and narrative technique. In spite of this the Indian novel in English has definitely taken many steps forward after the first world war. The first world war stimulated
the nationalist spirit among the Indians and further the freedom movement led by Mahatma Gandhi became an all India experience. The entire nation and the Indian novel in English were affected by it during the 1930’s. The writers such as Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao attempted to explore the contemporary Indian society without distorting the reality. They were reformists and not didactic, yet, the motive of propaganda remained with them.

Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao emerged on the literary scene in 1930. It was the real beginning of Indian novel in English. They were labelled by William Walsh (1990: 62) as “The founding fathers”, “the genuine novelists”, “the inaugurators of the form.” They made their appearance in the thirties with the publication of Untouchable (1935), Swami and Friends (1935) and Kanthapura (1938) respectively and established the tradition of Indian English fiction. Indian novel in English around 1930s needed the novelists who could grasp the social scene with an insight into the human consciousness and who could interpret the real Indian world, distinctive in themes, issues and treatment in their fiction.

Mulk Raj Anand is humanist and a novelist with a purpose. He writes from his personal experience and the experiences of real people. For Mulk Raj Anand (2000: 65), the novel is “the creative
weapon for attaining humanness – it is the weapon of humanism.” He writes basically about the lower class life. Widely read novelist Anand is influenced by Charles Dickens, H. G. Wells and Tolstoy in both form and characterization. He followed the ancient Indian tradition of story telling, but his approach to themes and events, is of a social realist. Therefore, his novels are the novels of protest and social realism. Anand is influenced by the two ideologies – the Western Marxism and the Eastern Gandhism. He deals with the themes related to human predicament such as protest against social and industrial evils, the status of women in India, exploitation caused by caste system, class system and imperialism. G. S. Balarama Gupta (1977: 115) aptly says,

The moot point to be noted about Anand is that he has firmly believed in the role of a writer as essentially a crusader in the cause of humanity: no hotch potch of Vendanta’s, no hazy mysticism, but inalienable faith in man.

Anand’s early novels, Coolie (1936), Two Leaves and a Bud (1937), Village (1939), Across the Black Waters (1940) The Sword and the Sickle (1942) and The Big Heart (1942) justify this point, as Anand has brought in them the lower class downtrodden people such as the scavengers, the coolies, the leather-workers, and the
untouchables who form the bulk of Indian society. His novel *Untouchable* is a classic experimentation in respect of theme and technique. It represents a day from morning till evening in the life of a sweeper boy named Bakha who is in the words of E. M. Forster (1981: 9) “a real individual, lovable thwarted, sometimes grand, sometimes weak, and thoroughly Indian.”

R. K. Narayan, on the other hand, is the novelist of middle class sensibility. He is a natural story-teller in his novels from *Swami and Friends* (1935) to *The Painter of Signs* (1976). His novels *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The Dark Room* (1938), *The English Teacher* (1945) and *Mr. Sampath* (1949) brilliantly and realistically describe the South-Indian life. William Walsh (1983: 250), says that R. K. Narayan’s writing is “a distinctive blend of Western technique and Eastern material.” The world of R. K. Narayan’s novels is Malgudi, an imaginary South-Indian town. In the words of Alan Warner (1961: 190) Narayan “writes admirably plain English.” His is a very simple and straight-forward style of narration.

Raja Rao is another prominent Indian novelist writing in English. But he is not as prolific writer as Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan. His concern with philosophical and mythological aspects distinguishes him from Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan. His first
novel *Kanthapura*, a masterpiece, describes the village life and peasant sensibility. It shows the influence of Gandhian ideology on an ordinary Indian. R. K. Srivastava (1987: 15) remarks:

Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* is a garrulous account of primitivistic, religious, political and social activities of rural people. The novel is not a two-dimensional picture of villagers but a colourful audio-visual presentation …. characterizing the entire country. Kanthapura is India in miniature.

On language crisis, Raja Rao, in his ‘forward’ to *Kanthapura* (1938, rpt. 1971:5-6), says, “We cannot write like English. We should not. We can write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us.” He adds that English is “the language of our intellectual make up…. but not of our emotional make up.” About the rich contribution of Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao, the makers of Indian novel in English C. D. Narasimhaiah (1973: 63) observes that the ‘human centrality’ of Mulk Raj Anand, ‘the comic as a mode of study in maturity’ in R. K. Narayan, and the ‘metaphysical aspect’ of Raja Rao have really enriched the realm of Indian novel in English.

Besides these three stalwarts, K. S. Venkataramani, A.S.P. Ayyar, Ahmed Ali, Dhan Gopal Mukherji, K. A. Abbas and
Humayun Kabir have also written novels on rural, political and social life of India. Thus the major contribution to the Indian novel in English in the pre-Independence era, is of men and not of women. Novel became an established art form in the works of the ‘Three Musketeers’ (M. K. Naik, 1977: 375) – Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao- who were still actively engaged in creative writing at the turn of the century. The novel form further evolved and matured in the hands of scholars like Bhabhani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal, Arun Joshi, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande etc. in the post-Independence period. The post-Independence Indian novel in English has been termed as the modern novel. It is not radically different from the novel in the pre-Independence India. It is no longer imitative. Instead, it has the modern tendencies of experimentation in form, content and technique. Modernism, though came late to India, it has played an important role in shaping the second generation novelists such as Bhabhani Bhattacharya, B. Rajan, Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal, Arun Joshi, Kamala Markandaya, R. P. Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and a few others who have made a tremendous contribution to novel in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.
The Indian novelists before Independence were mainly interested in social, political and historical concerns. But later in 1950s a new kind of novel dealing with the contemporary issues appeared on the Indian literary scene. The psychological novel depicting the human personality and inner realities of life replaced the realistic novel. Makarand Paranjape says (1991: 25), “The novel interprets or creates reality.” But the novel cannot be realistic or cannot be completely devoid of social reality, therefore, there should be balance between the personal and the social. The novels written in the post-Independence period successfully render this Indian reality. A number of novelists like Arun Joshi and Anita Desai have explored the psychological and sociological conflicts in the social and the individual’s life. There is a kind of shift from socio-political concerns to the inner life of human being. The modern Indian writers write about the socio-cultural predicament of the modern man. Many modern novels dealt with man’s alienation from his self, his class, his society and humanity at large. In other words, the centre of their novels shifted from the society to an individual. C. Paul Verghese’s comment in this regard is worth quoting (1971: 25). Most of the novelists in their eagerness to find new themes ‘renounced the larger world in favour of the inner man’ and continued ‘a search for the
essence of human living’. It is this trend that continued in the seventies and it also shaped the novels of the eighties.

Unlike 1930’s and 50s, the year 1980s marks the significant stage in the growth and development of Indian novel in English. It is during the 80s that some very promising Indian English novelists and their novels earned great honours and distinctions in the Western academic world. The Indian novel in English “has now attained a luxuriant growth and branched off in more directions than one,” says R. S. Pathak in his ‘Preface’ to Recent Indian Fiction (1994: 9). It followed a definite pattern of development making tremendous progress in the eighties and nineties in the hands of old masters as well as the new talented novelists like Salman Rushdie and others. Their achievement lies in finding out the new fictional themes and techniques. In a sense they are contemporary novelists as they deal with the history of the post-Independence India, the predicament of the modern man and the contemporary reality in modern India. They made the novel a medium of global expression.

Thus the novel, with the publication of Salman Rushdie’s Booker prize-winner Midnights Children (1981) received an international acclaim and became a major force in the world literature. It has created the Indian tradition of fiction to which
belong “Rushdie’s Children” (The New York Times, 16 December, 1991), viz. Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Allan Sealy, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharoor, Farrukh Dhondy, Rohinton Mistry and Firdaus Kanga. Each one of them produced prize-winning novel. In their hands, the Indian novel in English made tremendous progress. Besides these makers of ‘new novel’ some other novelists were concerned with the life and the experiences of the minorities in India, for example, Pratap Sharma, Ranga Rao, Boman Desai, Mukunda Rao, Gopal Gandhi and so many others enriched the realm of Indian novel in English beyond the expectations. According to K.R.S. Iyengar (1985: 322) novel is “a living and evolving literary genre, and is trying, in the hands of its practitioners, a fusion of form, substance and expression that is recognizably Indian yet also bearing the marks of universality”.

1.3 THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIAN NOVEL IN ENGLISH

The Indian Novel in English in the pre-Independence period has mostly remained male-dominated as a very few women novelists such as Toru Dutt, Raj Lakshmi Debi, Krupabai Sathinadhan, Sawarnkumari Ghosal and Cornelia Sorabji emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. But during the post-Independence period there
appeared a number of women writers on the literary scene such as Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande as well as the younger generation of Githa Hariharan, Nina Sibal, Namita Gokhale, Shobha De, Suniti Namjoshi, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai (winner of Booker Prize for *The Inheritance of Loss*, 2006) who have made a significant contribution to Indian English Novel and helped for its development. All of them have written about their own problems and sexual politics that defines gender relationship. They are more sensitive in describing the lives and concerns of women than the male writers. Their novels project female experiences, social situations and criticism. Meena Shirwadkar (1965: 202) remarks, “feminism, free-sex, isolation, alienation, identity crisis or an individual struggling to be oneself are some of the thematic concerns of the women novelists today.” These writers not only describe the lives of women as they have been living but also how women can live afresh with their own identity. Woman with high feelings and aspirations makes her appearance in the novel after novel. This appearance of the new, fully awakened woman, ready to fight against the patriarchal norms in order to live a meaningful life, is a recent phenomenon. The female characters created by these novelists do not accept the low secondary status in a male-dominated Indian society, that is, conservative.
The colonial rule, patriarchal practices and traditions enhance the ideology of female subordination which has resulted in the rise of ‘feminism’ in 1960s. The central theme, therefore, is the emergence of ‘new woman’ in the fast changing social milieu. As a result, the marginalization, insecurity and segregation experienced by women have been effectively depicted in the novels of the women novelists.

Kamala Markandaya, one of the outstanding woman novelists in her first novel *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) depicts how the rural economics in a South-Indian village is affected by industry and modern technology. *Some Inner Fury* (1957) is a tragedy “engineered by politics” even as *Nectar in a Sieve* is a tragedy “engineered by economics” as K.R.S. Iyengar (1984: 440) puts it. *A Silence of Desire* (1961) and *Possession* (1963) unfold the layers of spiritual reality and the mystic vision of India, whereas *A Handful of Rice* (1966) focuses on the urban economics. A protest against the attack of modern technology is the subject of *The Coffer Dams* (1969). In *Two Virgins* (1972) and *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), she has handled the themes of poverty and weaker sex. She projects an image of the changing traditional society.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, occupies a significant place in the history of Indian women novelists in English. She writes about the
interaction between two cultures – European and Indian. Meenakshi Mukherjee (1971: 84) observes, “Jhabvala brings an European sensibility to work on the material which is non-European” in her novels like To Whom She Will (1955), The Nature of Passion (1956), The Householder (1960), Get Ready for Battle (1962), A Backward Place (1965), A New Dominion (1972) and Heat and Dust (1975). Jhabvala is basically concerned with the analysis of ‘domestic friction’.

The novels of Nayantara Sahgal, on the other hand, realistically reflect the contemporary Indian political theme. In her interview with V. Mohini (1990: 68), Sahgal firmly believes that “fiction will be sterile if there is no relationship with the present day society.” She brings into limelight the corruption, disorder, educational anarchy and violence among the frustrated youths in the changed political scenario in India. According to Jasbir Jain (1978: 9), there is also “a genuine concern for human values and human beings” in her writing. Neena Arora (1991: 3) observes “a juxtaposition of two worlds: the personal world of man-woman relationship and the impersonal world of politics” in Sahgal’s A Time to Be Happy (1958), This Time of Morning (1968), Storm in Chandigarh (1969), The Day in Shadow (1971) and A Situation in New Delhi (1977). As a writer Sahgal does not believe in the arranged marriage, which is devoid of love and
mutual trust. On the other hand, she has complete faith in the meaningful relationships. She does not find anything wrong in having either pre-marital or extra-marital relations and makes a plea for women’s liberation.

Anita Desai holds unique place in the modern Indian novel in English. She explores the emotional world of women, the problems of adjustment, depression, hopelessness and anxieties in her novels such as *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye, Bye Blackbird* (1971), *Where Shall We Go this Summer?* (1975), *Fire On the Mountain* (1977), *Clear Light of Day* (1980) and *The Village By the Sea* (1982). Regarding man-woman relationship Anita Desai differs from Nayantara Sahgal because she believes that not only male partners but female partners are also equally responsible for estrangements in families. Anita Desai (1978: 4) is not particular about the selection of themes as she herself says:

My novels don’t have themes- at least not till they are finished, published or read, do I see any theme. While writing I follow my instinct, I follow flashes of insight, I veer away from or even fight anything that threatens to distort or destroy this insight, and somehow come to the end and look back to see the pattern of footprints on the sand.
Thus writing for Anita Desai, as she tells in an interview (The Times of India, 20 April, 1979), “is an effort to discover, and then to underline, and finally to convey the true significance of things.” For her writing is a matter of instinct, silence, compulsion and waiting, whereas, for Nayantara Sahgal, it is a passion.

Santa Rama Rau in her Remember the House (1956), The Adventures (1971), and Venu Chitale in her In Transit (1950) deal with high caste Hindu families. Unlike Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala and Kamala Markandaya, Bharati Mukherjee and Gita Mehta have already treated the theme of East-West encounter respectively in A Time to Be Happy (1957), Esmond in India (1958), The Nowhere Man (1972), Wife (1976) and Karma Cola (1980). The women novelists have made novel experiments in form and technique. Their basic concern is with the issue of women’s liberation. It seems that the Indian women novelists have taken up the demand for the equality in the enjoyment of all fundamental human rights – moral, religious, political, educational, legal and economic. They are the champions of feminism. Hence, Mulk Raj Anand (December 19, 1994) admits, “The women writers are more eloquent, intense, sensitive. Few male writers can give the same sense of intensity to their writing.”
Shashi Deshpande, the recipient of the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for her *That Long Silence* (1989), deals with the middle-class women who represent the majority in the modern Indian society. Deshpande (1998: 36) firmly believes that “all good writing is socially committed writing, it comes out of a concern for the human predicament.” Though she is not a staunch feminist, she writes about the marginal status of women. As a writer, Shashi Deshpande (1991: 34) takes us inside the consciousness of women characters and deals with, what she herself calls, “The vulnerability of women. The power of women. The deviousness of women. The happiness of women. The courage of women.” Most of her novels such as *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *A Matter of Time* (1996) and *The Stone Women* (2000) generally centre on family relationships, particularly the marital relationships.

Thus in the 1980’s and 90’s the women writers of older as well as younger generation have contributed considerably to the enrichment of the women’s writing. The readers witness the emergence of the ‘new woman’ in the novels of the younger generation of female writers. As the champions of feminism, they all advocate feminism as rightly said by Naresh K. Jain (1998: 9),
The women characters in Indo-Anglian novels coped with change in their lives and with the rival pull of tradition and modernity in their search for identity, independence, fulfilment and love whether within marriage or outside it.

In this chapter a modest attempt has been made to trace the development of Indian novel in English, taking into consideration the substantial contribution made by the male as well as female writers. Makarand Paranjape comments that these young ambitious writers are “gaining entrance into an international hall of literary fame” (New Quest, May-June 1998 : 135). According to M. K. Naik Indian Novel in English has a bright future as “more than half a dozen ‘Midnight’s Children’ burst recently upon the world fiction scene and dazzled everyone with their brilliance, winning several awards” (1997 : 1).

1.4 THE MAKING OF SHOBA DE

Shobha De (b.1948), born in a typical middle-class Maharashtrian family, educated in Delhi and Mumbai, has emerged as a major novelist on the Indian literary scene. However, the birth of Shobha De has not been a day of celebration for the family. Instead, it caused dejection and disappointment particularly to the grandmother and the mother, as they had expected son. They looked at her as an additional liability. Her sister Kunda, six then, had no
idea that it was only the birth of a son that called for celebration in her mother’s family. She had been told that her elder sister Mandakini had had an auspicious kumkum hand impression imprinted on her back, to commemorate her brother Ashok’s birth. Innocently, she had demanded the same privilege for Shobha, to which her grandmother had scornfully said (1998: 13) “What? You want kumkum on your back? Go and fetch some cow-dung instead. Do you realize there are three daughters in the family now? Three. Weren’t two enough?” Thus very early in life Shobha De had witnessed and experienced humiliation of gender discrimination.

In the course of time, her father was appointed as an assistant solicitor to the Government of India. Consequently, the family shifted from the Satara District to the capital town of Delhi. In Delhi, they lived next to Khan Market. Shobha was only ten then. She vividly recalls her years in Delhi (1998: 15).

There was one regular stopover, a small photo-studio where I insisted on getting my pictures taken. I still have those grainy black-and-white prints and when I look at my self-conscious poses, the expression surprisingly serious in most, I wonder whether the long relationship I later developed with the camera was foretold in that tiny studio in Delhi.
After some years, due to her father’s transfer the family moved to Mumbai. She knew nothing about Mumbai, still she felt that she was going home. She graduated from St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai with a degree in Psychology. At present she lives in Mumbai with her family — a city that she considers a ‘character’, not just a locale, in her work. It is wonderful to see how the location in Mumbai — the old Queen’s Road determined the course of her life and the choices she made. Shobha De recalls the past and says (1998: 20), “This was downtown Mumbai—fashionable, affluent and sexy….. I had found my kind of environment, my kind of people, my kind of fun.” As brought up in neo-rich, sophisticated surrounding though much against her father’s will, Shobha De entered and continued modelling. The modelling gave her both national and international exposure to the world of glamour and advertising, but it did not satisfy her fully.

However, the year 1970 marks the turning point in the life of Shobha De as she began her career in Journalism. While talking with a friend at Creative Unit, a modest advertising agency, she was asked a question — “Can you write?” (1998: 84). It was a question that changed the whole course of her life and gave her a new vocation. In ‘Why I Write”, (1994: xi) De observes that she writes because she loves writing:
I write because I like the feel of paper under my ball point pen. Writing is pure sex. I like to see a blank sheet fill up. I like to think while my fingers move. I like the way words jump around inside my head impatiently like they can’t wait to pop out and be born.

This is how she turned to writing. She founded and edited three popular magazines namely ‘Stardust’, ‘Society’ and ‘Celebrity’ and earned both name and fame while working as a freelance writer and columnist for several leading newspapers and magazines. Further, she was also consulting editor to ‘Sunday’ and ‘Megacity’. Thus media and journalism made her style and language mature. Besides, they provided her different angles to look at society. It is here that she encountered eminent personalities, actors and actresses from film industry and other social celebrities. While living in cosmopolitan cities like Delhi and Mumbai, Shobha De observed beastly human tendencies in and around. Therefore, her sound and fury against such evil tendencies reflected in her novels are not devoid of meaning. She is a glamorous personality who is a keen observer of upper-class life of cosmopolitan cities, particularly Mumbai. The story of her life is the story of the ‘New Woman’ of the post-Independence India.

Shobha De has been many things to many people: a super model, celebrity journalist, magazine editor, columnist, wife, mother,
social commentator and TV scriptwriter. In fact, she wears many hats. Her latest one is of fashion designer. But above all she is the most popular Indian woman writer writing in English. Most of her books are best sellers as she realistically projects the image of the upper-class woman of contemporary India. She is a gifted writer having an extraordinary ability to discuss very sensitive aspects of human relationship in general and man-woman relationship in particular. In other words, the time-tested populist ingredient of sex and a tempestuous style contributed to her making as one of the most popular writers today. Within the span of just fifteen years she has produced fourteen books. She appeared on the Indian literary scene with the publication of her first novel Socialite Evenings in 1989. From Socialite Evenings to the recent non-fiction Spouse : The Truth About Marriage (2005) and Superstar India (2008), she has certainly evolved as a sensitive woman writer. The modern Indian woman at the core of her fiction is the most important feature of her writing. Though her writing consists of novels, stories, letters, essays and an autobiography, she is more known as a modern Indian woman novelist than anything else. Her fictional output consists of seven novels, Socialite Evenings (1989), Starry Nights (1992), Sisters (1992), Strange Obsession (1992), Sultry Days (1994), Snapshots
(1995), and *Second Thoughts* (1996). As a creative writer she occupies a significant place in the history of Indian novel in English.

*Socialite Evenings* is the first novel of Shobha De which depicts different modes of human nature. The principal character Karuna reveals her childhood experiences and also new experiences in the company of Anjali and Charlie. Karuna was in her childhood days, a problem child both at home and at school. She refused all the traditional ways that come in the way of the total development of a woman. As she grows up, there develops the emotional urge in her to identify herself with the outside world and the girls of her age who had everything as per their wish in their life. To fulfil her urge she turned to modeling and established friendship with Anjali, a prominent Mumbai socialite. Through her association with Anjali Karuna realizes that Anjali was not happy with her brutal and boorish husband. One day, Karuna drove along with Anjali and Abe to attend party in their ‘beach car’. Abe enjoyed the party whereas Anjali and Karuna went for swimming. Suddenly Karuna felt shy because her shift floated up to her neck and her bright red panties were in view. One of Anjali’s friends mentioned this pleasant view to Karuna. But Anjali was furious not because of Abe’s misbehaviour with other woman but because of the scene in water, which was noticed by her friend. Anjali was in love with that person. Due to this incident,
Karuna went away from Anjali to New York. Later, after returning from New York she broke her engagement with Bunty.

Karuna met a new admirer of her. During college hours she used to go out with him. One day he gave the alarming news that he was going to America for further studies. Thus, Karuna’s affair came to an end. Later on, she got married to a young and rich man. It was at this time that Abe divorced Anjali. All the husbands of Karuna’s friends were not evil men, but what they did to their wives was beyond evil. Soon Karuna, too, was bored by her joyless married life and hence established friendship with a married man. She realized that she was happy before marriage. But later, her life was guided and dominated by her husband according to his wishes and desires. Even then she did not protest. Instead, Karuna accepted her married life as it was. She never argued with her husband. Anjali returned from her vacation in France. Once, she accompanied Nisha to Karuna’s house. Nisha’s nude show at Karuna’s place was a different experience to both of them. Especially, Anjali was interested in knowing her ways of sex with men. Being a prostitute, Nisha used new ways to seduce her customers.

Karuna’s eldest sister, who had married the engineer and moved to London, gave shocking news that she was divorcing her
husband. Karuna approved her sister’s decision because at least she had the guts to break free from an unhappy situation. Karuna’s sole comfort was her new friend, Ritu. After Ritu’s return from Switzerland, she had an affair with Karan the photographer. Her only complaint about her husband was his lack of adventurousness. So, she established extra marital relations.

Anjali was going to marry Kumar. They had enjoyed their days together before marriage, but they had been aloof in their physical entanglement as Kumar himself had insisted that they should not share bed before marriage. Anjali’s marriage was spectacular. But some days after her marriage it was revealed that Kumar was a ‘homosexual’ and had relation with Murty. Ritu, on the other hand had a different experience. Her husband had beaten her with a leather belt. Karuna was stunned after listening to Ritu’s problem. Later, Anjali invited her friends for lunch at her home. In one of the rooms she had her ‘Krishna Mandir’, where they had a big ‘Puja’ at ‘Janmashtami’. Karuna accompanied Ritu and her husband for the ‘Janmashtami’ party. Anjali was immersed in her devotion to Babaji, their spiritual guide. Ritu was so fascinated by the personality of Babaji that she wanted to seduce him. Babaji recognized her intention and invited her the next day to his suite at Taj Mahal Hotel. But both Ritu and Karuna were disappointed as Babaji kept them waiting.
Karuna’s husband invited his old friend Krish to his house. Krish visited Karuna’s house and offered her a ‘Chameli Gajara’. Initially, Karuna was surprised with the advanced behaviour of Krish and gradually felt attracted towards him. The common factor between them was that both of them had no children. Karuna accompanied Krish and her husband to Venice promising her husband to break her affair and say good bye to Krish. Thus she enjoyed the Venice trip with her husband and Krish. Karuna was surprised to know Krish’s reaction towards her husband. But when he demanded money to buy a good-bye gift Karuna felt very sorry to discover this exploitative and utterly inhuman side of Krish.

Later Karuna wanted to talk to her parents about the changes that had occurred in her life due to Krish. But unfortunately, they were involved in the psychological problem of their second daughter Alak who was paralysed mentally and physically. Hence, for change, Karuna turned to Anjali and was interested in the stories about Babaji. Ritu had an affair with an Arab named Gul. One day, Karuna was shocked to know that she was pregnant. Her husband was not ready to accept this news, because he knew that the child was not his but Krish’s. So he suggested Karuna to get rid of it and to give her consent for their divorce as their mutual consent would save them from a bitter court battle. Karuna moved to Anjali’s house for shelter
and only after going through the turmoil of operation, she felt relaxed. When Karuna went to stay with the Mehta’s as a paying guest, the first person to visit her was Krish. He gave her the news of her ex-husband’s marriage to Winnie, who was rude and possessive. In order to meet her daily expenses Karuna went to ‘Prithvi Theatre’ to get a small role where she met Girish Shridhar, a great film-maker, who offered Karuna the role of Shakuntala. Karuna received a dinner invitation from Girish Shridhar. Both enjoyed discussing their personal lives. That night Karuna did not return home. So, next day, her landlady made a great scene over this. Karuna shifted to her parent’s house, who were very pleased to see her. She continued her advertising work and was successful in this career. Girish went to see her parents but they were doubtful about his stability, income and life-style. Karuna was in confusion about her relations with Girish though Kunal had told her about Girish’s love for her. Due to past bitter experience she was not ready for any sacrifice and hence, rejected his proposal.

After some months, Karuna received a call from a reporter named Ranbir Roy, who asked her to accompany him to Washington to work with him. But she refused. However, they met frequently in the coffee house. Karuna maintained a kind of distance from him. She used to feel sick because of the attitude of men in society. At
parties or social functions, Karuna did not have any escort; so men would linger around her hungrily thinking that she was available any time. She wanted to write about her life; the opening line would be: “I was born in a dusty clinic in Satara, a remote village on the outskirts of Maharashtra” (1). Thus Socialite Evenings unfolds a girl from middle-class, named Karuna, rising to the status of a star.

The entire story of the novel revolves around Karuna and her friends. Karuna does not remember much of her childhood except the strict behaviour of her father and the mother totally engrossed in her domestic duties. Karuna’s life of her own started only after they migrate to Mumbai. There she met Anjali, the prominent socialite and the wife of a wealthy man. Her whole world changed and she started dreaming of a career in films and holidays abroad. She got married to a rich businessman but he was not the right ‘husband material’. “He wasn’t looking for any stimulation either intellectually or emotionally” (130).

The institutions of family and marriage have come under tremendous strain in the modern times, primarily in the western culture and in the rich strata of the Indian society. Socialite Evenings presents the crumbling families and marriages of the different women characters in the novel. The definition of the institution of marriage
gets new interpretation in the context of Shobha De’s discussion. It grants complete sexual freedom to women with no bondage of marital relationship.

Aasha Rani the protagonist of Starry Nights is a beautiful film star and a daughter of renowned film producer of Madras. Her father abandoned Aasha Rani with her sister and mother. Consequently in her early teens Aasha Rani was pushed by her mother in the never ending gluttony of pornographic films to be exploited.

Aasha Rani had to struggle and sacrifice a lot to become a film star. She used to attend parties along with Kishenbhai, a film distributor with the intention to be acquainted with new producers. Aasha Rani’s contacts with Kishenbhai, Akshay, Sheth Amirchand open the doors of success and prosperity for her. Being impressed by her sexual encounter, Sheth Kishenbhai showered money in cash and in different forms on her. Her trip to Dubai is the outcome of courtesy of Sheth Amirchand.

The bold way of Linda, the journalist of Showbiz magazine impressed Aasha Rani so much so that sexual encounter took place between them. Its Linda’s theory that a woman could give better sexual satisfaction to another woman than a man leads them to have sex. Aasha’s introduction with Abhijeet Mehra on the premiere show
of a film made him to fall in love with her and to forget his wife
Nikita being very cold sexually. The temporary sexual relationship of
Aasha Rani and Abhijeet came to an end as she lost interest in him.
Aasha Rani’s infatuation for Akshay results in her attempt of suicide.
This gives vent to make it public news. For Linda, it becomes a big
news item for newspaper and magazines. Sensitive Abhijeet supports
Aasha and plans and executes long tour to New Zealand but Abhijeet
is brought back to India by his father.

Aasha’s encounter with Jay in a lonely state in an alien country
makes Aasha to accept Jay’s marriage proposal. Nanny’s entry into
the life of Jay breaks Jay’s and Aasha’s relationship. Akshay’s death
shocks Aasha. Sudha’s entry into film world becomes a challenge
for Aasha. Having escaped from horrifying cruel realities of life, she
goes back to Madras. Her father’s faith in her gives her strength and
courage to restart their old family film studio in Madras. Now she
had her own identity, a new existence with an overriding sense of
belonging and an opportunity to do something creative in her life.
Instead of escaping from the responsibilities or breaking down
because of the problems, Aasha chooses to make headway through so
many odds. In the words of Anita Desai (1990 : 972):

In reality woman is nothing but a common drudge, first
in her father’s house then her husband’s, a beast of
burden bearing an endless string of children, accepting the brutality of husband, she has no alternative.

But Shobha De’s women are different, quite the opposite of Anita Desai’s. They have the courage to think of the alternatives.

Shobha De’s novel *Sisters*, written in 1992, reveals the relation between two sisters – Mikki and Alisha. It opens with a news headline: “Industrialist and wife die in air mishap”, on the front page of The Times of India. Just a few miles away from Mikki, in a small suburb of Mumbai, another pair of young eyes was scrutinizing the same paper. Her name was Alisha, the illegitimate daughter of Seth Hiralal. Hiralal Industry lost its master Seth Hiralal and his wife. Mikki, their only daughter, suddenly found herself the owner of the sprawling Hiralal Industrial Empire. Abandoning her studies in the United States, she returned to Mumbai. She found the business in a mess, almost bankrupt. She could turn for help, the beautiful Alisha, her half-sister. But Alisha did not accept Mikki as her sister. She was jealous of Mikki for Mikki had all the facilities that a daughter needed. All her needs were catered for by her parents and she was sent even abroad for further education. Alisha also dreamt of going abroad for her education but after Seth Hiralal’s death her dream remained unfulfilled. Later, Ramanbhai informed Alisha that her father had left all the cash money to her and all the debts to Mikki.
Thus Alisha was a little bit satisfied with Mikki’s condition. Ramanbhai was the sole adviser and attendant of Mikki on whom she could rely. Shanay her cousin was like a colleague, co-worker, an honest friend and a spy to Mikki.

Mikki married Binny Malhotra a wealthy man. But after marriage she realized that she had been cheated, for Binny took all her assets in his hands to make her a mere puppet in his hands. Unfortunately Binny died in an accident and again Mikki became the sole holder of Seth Hiralal’s as well as Binny’s property. Simultaneously, Alisha also settled in her business. After her mother Leelaben’s death, Alisha also tried to commit suicide. She was badly in need of blood and her condition was serious. At this critical time, Mikki looked after her sister and then slowly the sisters came close.

Anjanaben, Mikki’s aunt wanted to arrange the marriage of her son Shanay with Mikki since they were good childhood friends. But Mikki even could not think of Shanay as her husband. Alisha was tired of her miserable life. She thought of her mother’s house as garbage; so, she wanted to get away from it. Her mother had a new man everyday in her bed. This was all disgusting for Alisha. In the course of time Shanay gave the shocking news to Mikki that her parent’s plane crash was not an accident. One day Ramanbhai went
to Alisha’s flat at Vile Parle to meet both Alisha and her mother as he wanted to discuss business with them. Alisha arranged for the meeting ignoring his bad, inhuman behaviour at her father’s funeral. He gave the good news to Alisha that her father had set up a Trust in her name and after turning twenty; she will have full access to money.

One day, Mikki and Navin went to Oberoi Towers. Suddenly and unexpectedly there came a man with a card containing the message ‘To the most beautiful lady in India’ (50). The man was Mr. Binny Malhotra. He was well acquainted with Mikki, her family and also her business crisis. Two days later, Mikki, accepting the invitation, went to the house of Binny Malhotra where he made a business offer that she should marry him and give all the business in his hands which Mikki declined. Binny came across with the news of Mikki’s engagement with Navin. He asked one of his men to get all the details about Navin. Amy was a good friend of Mikki. She gave some tips about business to Mikki that she should not give all her business in the hands of Navin. Instead, she should keep some cards in her hands. Mikki realized that all the major decisions about Navin’s life were taken by his mother. Mikki was expecting Navin’s helping hand in the critical financial position of Seth Hiralal Industry but all in vain. Thus, their relation came to an end. During her crisis period, it was Binny Malhotra who offered his help to Mikki which
she willingly accepted as a result she was engaged to him. At her engagement with Binny Malhotra, Mikki invited Amy, her sole companion, friend and guide. The engagement party was well-arranged. However, on the day of Mikki’s marriage, the headline in the morning paper shocked the city: “Was Seth Hiralal murdered?” (101). The wedding was a spectacular affair arranged by Binny. Mikki noticed Urmi the first wife of Binny Malhotra being escorted out of ‘mandap’ with a young girl by her side, because she could not control her sob. Mikki was somewhat disturbed by the scene. Within six months after marriage, Mikki started grumbling about Binny. Binny was furious towards Mikki. He slapped her wrist and warned her to be an obedient wife, without any questions. She accepted all the torture and trouble in Binny’s house, because she loved him. Urmi was no longer a secret. Binny used to phone her in the presence of Mikki. And Mikki had meekly accepted Urmi, Binny’s first wife and two children. She was helpless for she had already handed over every asset to Binny.

Alisha finally found the home of her dreams which was near Mikki’s bungalow. She was particularly impressed with Sapna, a divorcee who had returned from Chicago. Sapna’s strong point was her organizational ability. She introduced methods and systems into Alisha’s company and gave it the professionalism it had previously
lacked. Alisha had a sexual relationship with Navin. She wanted to maintain this relation to make Mikki jealous. Leelaben, far from enjoying her daughter’s new found riches, found herself completely alone and sinking into depression. One day, Leelaben was in a bad plight. So she was taken to Dr. Kurien’s hospital for immediate treatment and was admitted there for many days. Alisha was impressed by the manner and the personality of the doctor. But when she learnt from the doctor that he was married and had two children, she felt intensely disappointed.

Binny went on a business trip to London; without informing Mikki about his plans. So, Mikki enrolled her name in a six-week crash course in Gourmet Cooking being conducted by a visiting French chef in a suburban five-star hotel. Lucio was a young Goan boy, who was hoping to open his own restaurant in Goa. He was the cooking classmate of Mikki. One day, Mikki received a call from Ramanbhai. He was very seriously warning Mikki that her life was in danger, and that Binny Malhotra wanted to kill her, Mikki was shocked and disturbed by this striking news. One afternoon Mr. Malhotra returned home and found Lucio and Mikki in the kitchen. He was furious to see Lucio, at his kitchen and asked both to get out of his house. Mikki was shocked by Binny’s sudden attack on her. The very next day, she received a divorce notice from Binny.
After some days of nursing at Dr. Kurien’s Hospital, Alisha’s mother was no more. So, Mikki went to meet Alisha; but Alisha was furious to see Mikki at her place and she turned her out of her house. Later, Mikki received a call from Dr. Kurien, informing her about Alisha’s attempt to kill herself. Mikki was stunned by the news. She rushed to Dr. Kurien’s hospital. She attended Alisha for three and half days. She even donated her blood for Alisha. Sapna told Mikki the reason of Alisha’s attempted suicide. After learning every bit of help offered and service rendered by Mikki, Alisha accepted Mikki’s invitation to stay with her. Sapna gave the shocking news to Mikki that her working with Alisha was pre-planned, because she wanted to take revenge. Years ago Sapna had to abort her child conceived from Seth Hiralal. And later he never bothered to know about her. After some days, Mikki heard the news of Binny’s death along with his wife and two children. She attended the funeral of her husband at Bangalore. She would now inherit Binny’s property as well as the father’s old companies, which were in the custody of Binny. But a man was threatening Mikki on phone that he had killed her parents, her husband and now wanted to kill her. Mikki informed this to Mr. Gokhale, a Police Commissioner and a friend of her father. He assured his help to Mikki and this was a great relief to her.
One day, Mikki was kidnapped when she went for a morning walk. The person was her father’s old employee, his ‘gurkha’. Mikki’s father had raped his beautiful wife, so, he wanted to take revenge against everyone in the family. Later, Ramanbhai revealed the truth, or the suspense behind Seth Hiralal’s and Binny’s deaths that he himself was the culprit, who had planned everything and now wanted to kill Mikki also. But fortunately, Shanay came with the police force to rescue her. Mikki was now safe and happy with her sister Alisha. Alisha and Mikki enjoyed their trip to London, shopping, flirting and having fun with Italian men. The sisters were interviewed by a local T.V. Network and the resort’s glossy society magazine. On the day back on their flight, Alisha saw two Indians. Mikki restrained her but Alisha told her that for her whole life, she would not live without men that she needed one whom she could marry. The same was also Mikki’s wish.

*Strange Obsession* opens on Amrita’s leaving of Delhi the safety of hearth and home, and a family she loves, to enter the treacherous world of Mumbai modelling. Being a model Amrita was crazy about clothes. She had great fascination for fashionable clothes. She would always like to dress in well attire especially her favourite – Guess jeans and a black Gap T-shirt. According to her
mother it was natural for an attractive, ambitious and glamorous model to have the best.

Meenakshi Iyengar called ‘Minx’ was buying a pack of imported cigarettes in Colaba when she spotted Amrita for the first time. In the very first meeting Meenakshi complimented Amrita: “You are gorgeous … you know that? Of course you do. Everybody must be telling you so?” (6) In this way they get acquainted but Amrita was terribly affected by the compliment. She had received compliments and had been receiving them all her life but this time Amrita was startled as a woman and not a man had ever looked at her the way Minx just had. No previous compliment had affected her in the same manner. One day Minx sent flowers to Amrita and surprised her. Amrita met Karan the photographer and the man who had shot the most talked about ads in the business. He was meticulous, demanding and sometimes impatient. When the photo campaign began Karan told Amrita that to him, model was a model – a subject for his camera. Nothing more. She could be a vase of flowers or an ice cube. When this incident took place Mikki was observing Amrita. She realized that she had fallen in love with her. Since Amrita was a stranger in Mumbai, Karan had told her in advance the strange story of the life of Meenakshi. In fact, it was a warning for Amrita to keep herself away from Minx.
Minx was a lesbian. She had strange obsession for Amrita. She had already made it clear that she was in love with Amrita. Amrita was shocked greatly by the abnormality of Minx. Wherever she went, Minx chased her. Amrita was panic-stricken. She felt to leave that whole modelling thing, give up her career and go back to Delhi. But it was Karan who prevented her from doing so. There was a fashion show. All the top models and designers from Mumbai and Delhi had got together for the show. Ranjit Grover, known as Rover had also arrived. After the show he had sex with Amrita. Hence, Minx was furious. There was hot exchange of words between Minx and Amrita. Despite the fact that Amrita know nothing about Rover, she was fascinated and fallen in love with him. Once, Minx ordered her men to attack him. Rover was beaten. He was unconscious, lying in a helpless condition in the dark room. Amrita was shocked by the Rover incident. She was completely confused. She found no way to get rid of Minx. She could not understand about what to do and what not.

One day, in her conversation with Amrita, Minx narrated to Amrita the story of her early life. How her mother was busy in the Bridge Club and had no time to spare for her daughter. How her father used to beat her and expect love from her. In what kind of atmosphere and surrounding she was raised in. How she was sexually
exploited by her own father and so on. Minx pitied her father for his sexless life and believed it to be her duty to fulfil his needs. This created a psychological rift and led to a pathetic condition. She was able to get what she wanted but here she failed. She became a sexual competitor of her own mother. She also experienced a kind of patriarchy and associated it with her childhood beatings, which she had got from her father. This made her counter revolutionary to the existent culture and society. This story of Minx’s life created a feeling of pity and sympathy and terribly affected Amrita. Consequently Amrita made up her mind to find a new place to stay because under any circumstance she wanted to break her relationship with Minx. As far as Amrita’s modelling was concerned, right now she was delivering – ad after sensational ad. Amrita was being hailed as the ‘super-model of the Nineties’. Once Amrita was upset since Lola, another model had stolen her ads assignment. Minx learnt this and had attacked Lola with acid and tried to murder her. She did that only for Amrita. But unfortunately Amrita was held responsible for the attack on the model Lola. According to Karan, Lola was a competitor or rival of Amrita. She was a threat to Amrita’s success, hence, he was doubtful of Amrita’s involvement in the crime.

Later, Amrita booked a flight to Delhi and on the way met Partha, an attractive man in his forties. As Amrita’s parents were not
informed of her arrival, there was nobody at the airport to receive her. However, when she reached home, she was very warmly welcomed by her parents and brothers. At the time of Partha’s party Amrita came across with Minx. In Delhi too she was followed by Minx which clearly indicates her strange passion for Amrita. After the party both Amrita and Minx returned back to Amrita’s home where Amrita’s mother greeted Minx warmly referring to her affectionately as ‘beti’. While in Delhi, once again Minx narrated to Amrita the story of what her father did to her and created a place for her in Amrita’s heart. Minx started making sexual advances which Amrita failed to resist. Consequently in the very home of Amrita in Delhi Minx had sex with her. Mrs. Aggarwal, Amrita’s mother was furious because both Minx and Amrita were late for dinner. Next day Amrita went to Partha’s studio for a modelling assignment but there also she was followed by Minx as a result Amrita was despaired. Therefore, her mother asked her if there was anything wrong with her? It was at this time Amrita had a call from Karan the photographer who wanted to marry her. But Amrita declined his proposal. Though Minx enjoyed sex with Amrita again and again Amrita did not disclose this to her parents. Consequently she was again and again victim to Minx’s sexual advances. No doubt, in the beginning Amrita felt to protest but later on surrendered to Minx. After the sexual experiences
with Minx, Amrita felt a great shame and very often appealed to Minx to get out of her life. She also talked to Partha about what Minx had done to her. In the beginning he was not serious about what Amrita was telling him but afterwards determined to help Amrita and save her from the lesbian Minx.

After a short visit to Delhi Amrita returned back to Mumbai, made a call to Karan and informed him about her whereabouts. Though Amrita was reluctant to stay with Minx, now Minx had arranged Amrita’s accommodation in her own well furnished bungalow at Colaba where no freedom was granted to her. Amrita was totally enslaved and six months later, it was Minx who started handling all the contracts and schedules of Amrita promising her to protect all her interests.

In Delhi, Amrita’s mother Mrs. Aggarwal was busy in finding out a suitable husband for Amrita. One day, Rakesh Bhatia, a young businessman – NRI, walked in with Mr. Aggarwal. He was tall, fair, neatly-dressed and well-mannered son-in-law of Mrs. Aggarwal’s dreams. He had lived in America for the past ten years. Mrs. Aggarwal asked him to stay for dinner and he agreed. Later, Mrs. Aggarwal phoned Amrita and told her about the recent developments regarding her marriage with all the details of Rakesh Bhatia. Amrita
was highly delighted because this was the opportunity she had been waiting for. Amrita thought that Rakesh was the one who was going to help her escape from the trap of Minx, therefore, she did not care who he was, what he did or how he looked. They met at the hotel Rangoli, liked each other and had almost fallen in love. But suddenly and unexpectedly Minx came there and threatened Rakesh with a revolver. Amrita was then taken home and was given the cruellest of punishments by Minx. It was Rakesh who informed Mrs. Aggarwal about how Amrita was trapped by Minx. Mrs. Aggarwal was greatly surprised and soon she rushed to Mumbai to rescue her daughter. Thus, Amrita with the help of mother and Karan, the photographer, managed to escape to Delhi. Whereas in Mumbai Minx tried to kill herself as she could not bear separation from Amrita. In the meantime Rakesh had gone to America to get the consent and blessings of his parents was now back to Delhi from his short trip.

After Amrita’s marriage to Rakesh, a suite in Oberoi Hotel was booked for the occasion. When they were fast asleep, at around 4 a.m. there was a knock on the door. It was none else but Minx who followed them. Their suite was set on fire. However, with the help of police and firebrigademen they could save themselves. Later, Rakesh and Amrita went to Nainital where they stayed in an old isolated bunglow on the hill, in the company of nature. Next day
Rakesh went out for a morning walk and never returned. Amrita was terribly frightened. The watchman and the others searched him but he was not found. But they noticed Rakesh’s scarf covered with blood. Soon the policemen reached there and only then it was discovered that Rakesh was kidnapped by Minx. When Amrita went there Minx got furious. The husband and wife were tortured by Minx. She attempted to kill both Amrita and Rakesh and also herself. Minx and Rakesh were in a critical condition. They were taken to the hospital. At this time Minx’s father Mr. Iyengar arrived there. It was he who promised Amrita that he had destroyed all the secrets of Amrita, such as video tapes, films, photographs and recordings which were with Minx. Amrita gave a sigh of relief. Two days later she came across with a news item that appeared in the Hindustan Times: ‘Meenakshi Iyengar died under tragic circumstances’ (208). Amrita read the headline a dozen times and felt that she was at last free. Thus Minx’s obsession for Amrita resulted in her death.

Shobha De’s Sultry Days opens with the filmy-style girl meets -boy in a College-canteen episode. The boy named Deb who was also known as God – a literal translation of his name indicated his domineering personality in the college. He was attractive in a repulsive manner. Nisha, the narrator-protagonist was attracted
towards him. She gives a detailed description of this God who calls her as his *Nasha*:

Oh yes – his hair. I hated that too. Matted locks – which I was sure were full of lice-nests and other creepy crawlies. One hand of his was invariably engaged in scratching. The hand didn’t stop at the head. I had never seen a man who itched so much. Scratch, scratch, scratch … his hand tore inside his filthy shirt and scratched up a bloody pool. It travelled down to his groin, up to his armpits, right round to his back. Sometimes he would pause mid-scratch to make some point and then start all over again. He really was most revolting … what he really needed desperately was a bath. (*SD 2-3*)

Besides God was a parasite living on other people for all his needs. However, though Nisha came from a respectable family of a company officer, she was happy that this filthy man accepted her as his companion. She fell in love with him as soon as she saw him in the college canteen. They continued their relationship even after their graduation. Nisha selected a job in an advertisement agency whereas God entered into the field of journalism. Naturally they came in contact with varied types of public figures. Being the son of a communist trade union leader, God attacked everyone including
Marxists, bureaucrats, businessmen, politicians, artists, writers and so on. In fact, the visionary and rebel in him had attracted Nisha towards him. But with the passing of time, he was corrupted by the good things of life money could buy. He became the trusted confidant of a corrupt businessman – politician called Yashwantbhai. This actually lowered God in the estimate of Nisha.

Shobha De’s *Sultry Days* is really crowded by both male and female characters. For example, Nisha’s father, who appeared artificial and ridiculous. He had affairs with young women including his Sindhi Secretary. Basu was an ineffectual artist without personality. Roy D’Lima was a strange man. Amar always had a toupee to cover his bald and had false teeth. In reality he was impotent though strutted around as a stud. Then there was Lucio. Who was interested in everything including lipstick, pimples and saris. As Deb told Nisha, Lucio was not a man. Pebble on the contrary, was thick and bull-like person. “It was said that he chewed up half-a-dozen models a day and still had the energy to sample some more” (154). Besides he was brilliant with wolf-like eyes who “changed girlfriends as often as he changed bed sheets” (155). Next, Iqbal was a clever and handsome man, who knew how to market himself. His “hunger for beautiful girls matched his thirst for tea. He loved both equally, though often the tea scored” (70). Yashwantbhai,
on the other hand, represented yet another aspect of the Mumbai world. An ordinary clerk in the fisheries department, he rose to the powerful position due to his connections with brokers and ruthless and unprincipled politicians. Even Anil was unusual and abnormal in many ways. Thus the image of man that emerges from the novels of Shobha De is generally negative.

The novelist has also presented a group of modern women, who feel liberated and emancipated. There was, for example, Karen Roy’s overbearing wife, who used her house like a showroom. Lotika believed that she was an *apsara* in her earlier life. Aarti was an account executive. Chandni, in her *ghagra* looked like a ‘sexy sweepress’ (155). Shona, the model from London, knew how to look different from Cleopatra to Sridevi. Tanya, the singer had bright eyes of the size of a full moon. She was the discovery of Lucio. Next, Feroze, who wanted to be the first Parsee director of Hindi films. But in reality she was a lesbian. Kiki was a chief rival of Zainab. According to God she was like a *bijli*. Pramila was a non-conformist lady from Nagpur. Married to a mechanical engineer, she had everything a woman could ask for. But she suffered from a big-city hang up. Then there were Khannas and Baroohas. Bubli was married to a ‘male whore’. Theirs was a strange and typical Bombay marriage. All these characters lack family background. Only Nisha
and God have some sort of family background. They move through this jungle of inhuman animal-like beings and record their public appearances.

Later, the issue of Tarantula and a divorcee Pramila, created a conflict between God and Yashwantbhai. It was God who was held responsible for the ugly stories about Yashwantbhai’s underworld connections that appeared in the press. God was called a double crosser. He was greatly shocked and offended by these accusations. The message was clear: God’s countdown had begun. The Yashwantbhai affair had also created bad blood between God and Nisha. God and Nisha were threatened by Yashwantbhai’s men. Suddenly there was the news that God had been shot. Nisha, with her parents, went to the hospital to see him. God was in a serious condition, struggling for life in ICU. After ten days he was brought into the General Ward. He told Nisha that how Yashwantbhai exploited Pramila and later deceived her. God had supported Pramila in her fight against Yashwantbhai. Consequently Yashwantbhai felt trapped. This was the reason why God had been shot. God was again shifted back to ICU. He looked so weak and helpless. God was dying. On the other hand, Yashwantbhai was cool. He was busy, in an election campaign. While God was in the hospital, several harsh pieces criticizing God had appeared in the newspapers. When the
final moment came neither God’s father nor Nisha was there. God had gone off without saying goodbye to anyone. “Died like a dog. Or like a god…” (374).

The novel *Snapshots* represents a snatched moment in time. It links the six characters together as they also link their past to the present. Shobha De uses the technique of exploring the lives of individuals within a closed environment for a brief period of time, so that there are different stories of the different characters that make up a mosaic. All the women shared sexual pleasure with other men than their husbands but without guilt. Each one of the woman is trapped by a patriarchal society from which there is no escape except through protest. Thus the archetypal role of a woman has been radically altered and women with increased awareness of gender roles and gender identity have emerged.

‘Prem linked to make love in public places’ (1). Prem and Aparna made love in the sea water, at a business meeting and also at the formal sit-down reception as he liked to make love in public places. Aparna enjoyed sex with Prem. Here by making a statement about what Aparna thinks are her sexual partner’s likes, Shobha De has made it clear that it is not the woman but the man who is in control of the situation. Aparna may be a career woman but she is
always at the mercy of man who wishes to use women. Though Prem is her employee she goes with him not because she is forced to but because he gives her pleasure she had never known before. One day she received an invitation to lunch at her friend and schoolmate Reema’s house. At the very sight of the note of invitation, Aparna recalled her past days with Swati and her other friends. Swati especially was vibrant, energetic and impressive. The lunch at Reema’s house was arranged by Swati. She had also suggested to all her friends to bring ‘Snapshots’, their old photographs. Reema was happy to invite her friends because she wanted to show them her five thousand square feet flat at Worli and impress her friends. Her husband was the biggest broker in the market. The couple of Aparna and Ravi was an attractive couple, always dressed in white. They were happily married; but later on, they had drifted away due to differences of opinion. One day he disappeared from her life without any explanation or apology. Aparna missed him deeply.

Surekha was a housewife. Her mother-in-law and her house both dominated her. She could not think of other things apart from the members of her family. She was happy to receive Reema’s lunch invitation. She organized everything from morning till evening. She packed a jar full of fresh ‘Muramba’ for Swati. Rashmi had an affair
with Parminder. Everybody called him as Pips. Later, he left Rashmi for she was untidy about her house.

Noor was kind to everyone. She was artistic and dreamy. Her father was a wiry, nervous Nawab whereas her mother had an affair with the other man. All these friends gathered at Reema’s flat for lunch. Everyone was happy and excited to meet Swati. They enjoyed drinks and snacks. All the friends were engaged in recalling their past memories while looking at their old photographs. Swati was curious to know all the facts about everybody, from the time they left the school. Everyone was interested in Reema’s story. She had a love affair with a boy called Raju. This has resulted in Reema’s pregnancy. Swati and Aparna helped her to get rid of this problem. Even after Reema’s marriage with Ravi, she had a physical intimacy with Randhir, her brother-in-law.

Noor had sexual relation with her own brother Nawaz. Once, Swati visited Noor’s house. They both drank brandy but unfortunately Nawaz got in and started scolding them. Swati was not at all afraid of Nawaz, instead, she challenged him and had a sex with him. Later, at the party, Swati showed her friends the cassette of ‘Kamasutra’ and the different roles she performed. Everyone in the party was impressed with the cassette. Aparna and Reema had a hot
discussion on Aparna’s assistant Prem because his wife was sceptic about their relationship. Surekha told her friends about her sexual relationship with her husband. Surekha and Dolly were too close in their school days. Even after her marriage, Surekha received Dolly’s help in her house as well as outside.

At the close of their get-together, Aparna was doubtful about the lunch arranged by Swati at Reema’s house. Hence, she asked Swati the reason or intention behind inviting every friend; but Swati very cleverly changed the subject by saying that she just wanted to meet her friends. But Aparna retorted her by saying, ‘You were a bitch as a young girl and you are a bigger bitch now’ (182). Aparna was angry with Swati because she had physical relationship with Rohit, Aparna’s husband. Later, Swati met Juan from Mendonca who was very much fascinated by her beauty and charm. So, he invited her to his place and proposed to her. However, Swati refused because her carefree life was hampered. There she was like a captive animal, a pet of Juan’s zoo. Aparna and Swati talked of their past in Reema’s house. On Reema’s insistence, they stayed for dinner at night. Surekha and Balbir went home; but still Rashmi and Noor were waiting. Rashmi and Reema had a passionate discussion over Rashmi’s changing sexual relations with different people. Suddenly Noor woke up from her sleep saying rudely to other friends that they
always neglected her, but she was well aware of their secrets. Swati abused Noor by saying, “You miserable bitch, you are not a woman, a complete woman” (216). She kicked Noor and tried to throw her out of the house.

Swati had received a fabulous offer from Hong-Kong – an offer to produce a serial on Indian women. She didn’t really have too many contacts in the entertainment industry in India. So, she had arranged this lunch party at Reema’s cost. Swati intended to call her serial as ‘Sisters of the Sub-continent’. Shonali gave the news that Noor had locked herself in the bathroom since she was humiliated. Later she was found dead because she committed suicide. The six school friends turned against each other and one another because they realized that they have been exploited by Swati for her own ends. They abused each other. Love was replaced by jealousy and hatred. Thus the get-together came to an unhappy end.

The prologue of Second Thoughts opens with the protagonist Maya’s visit to Mumbai. She is the central character in the novel. She is a very attractive young girl with her ‘skin-tone-a warm, rich, golden brown, like sunlight dancing on the Hooghly’, ‘gleaming jet-black hair’ and ‘dark eyes’ (4). It was on a sultry May evening in Mumbai that Maya met Ranjan, her future husband. It was her first
visit to Mumbai with her mother Chitra and uncle Prodipda. So far she had heard so much about the city. But when Maya got out of the train at Victoria Terminus she had almost jumped over a figure lying motionless on the platform. The figure was of a man lying dead. Nobody paid attention to him. People constantly moved forward and Maya was really surprised by their careless attitude. Though Maya was fascinated by the prospects of Mumbai, that initial experience despaired her.

Prodipda had an appointment of the Maliks to arrange Maya’s marriage with Ranjan Malik. Maya, her mother Chitra and uncle Prodipda were welcomed by Mrs. Malik, Ranjan’s mother. At the first meeting with Ranjan and his mother Mrs. Malik, Maya was tutored on the expectations of the Malik family. During the conversation Chitra had dropped a hint that Maya was keen on pursuing a career later in life because she was a trained textile designer. But according to Ranjan, he was earning enough to support a wife and family. After their short visit to the Maliks, they hired a taxi and on their way home Maya was on the front seat of the taxi. She was too busy looking at the shops along the road and wondering when she would become a part of the city whose spell she had fallen under. On second thoughts, when she saw the city throbbing with life, she forgot the deceit and desperation that she had smelt first
when she jumped over a dead man at Victoria Terminus. Now Maya was quite confident that Mumbai would be her eventual home. “Marrying Ranjan was like marrying Bombay, and she thought she was the luckiest girl in the locality, who had bagged a foreign-educated, Bombay-based bridegroom” (195). Maya wanted to flirt with the ‘other Bombay’ – the one she read about in the lively city papers and saw in Hindi films. But Ranjan thought that Mumbai was not safe. He would very often lecture Maya about how she should keep herself away from the different vendors and the house maids. They were tough, talkative, arrogant, pampered and ambitious. He also said to Maya, “you don’t know the roads or anything. This isn’t Calcutta. I suggest you stay at home. If you want to go anywhere, ask my mother to accompany you” (27). This thought of discovering Mumbai through her mother-in-law’s eyes did not appeal to Maya.

Soon after their marriage, Ranjan had given Maya a guided tour of the flat. He had pointed to the phone and said sternly, “only for emergencies, not for idle chit-chat” (67). Once, the idli seller told Maya that “modern life is so lonely. So lonely. Nobody to talk to. Nobody to share anything with” (65). Ranjan restricted Maya in every respect whether it was the question of talk with the outsiders or going to the city. Maya felt lonely. Though bored and felt suffocated, Maya got solace by short conversations with the vegetable
vendor. Frustration was caused to Maya by the kind of life she was leading. However, once a Bangladeshi shopkeeper explained to her – “This is Bombay. No time. No feelings. Everybody saving his own skin. You fight, you shout, you scream. You die. Others will step over your corpse and carry on” (98). Maya felt uncomfortable even in the company of her husband Ranjan. Though foreign-educated, Ranjan again and again reminded Maya of tradition. He never thought of her emotional needs. Her desire to have a true companion remained unfulfilled. Ranjan was ‘old fashioned and conservative’.

Nikhil Verma was Maya’s fourth floor college-going neighbour. He was good-looking, confident, sporty, flirtatious, fascinating and irresistible. Pushpa, his mother, introduced him to Maya. Once, Ranjan went out of the town for business purpose but before he left for the airport he had locked the out-station phone facility for Maya. Maya was left all alone in a flat she did not feel at home. She was left in a city which she did not belong to. Ranjan was her husband whom she was supposed to love, respect and miss but what she felt at that moment was relief at his absence. In such moments the thought of Nikhil comforted her. But again she thought that ridiculous because, “a newly married woman day–dreaming about a neigbour’s young son. Disgusting. And shameful” (32).
One day, suddenly Nikhil entered into Maya’s home and his presence started to lift her spirits. Then she did not care about who saw him and what would be the later consequences. Of course, Maya was terrified as she felt she was being disloyal to Ranjan and to her parents. She wanted Nikhil to go out. Simultaneously she wanted to jump on Nikhil’s motorbike and say goodbye to her uninspiring life without regret. Finally she got ready and went out for a ride with him. Thus at least for a while Maya felt free. She thought that she was free of her housewifely duties for the next ten days. It was the time to enjoy the short-termed liberty before it was snatched away. At the end of the motorbike ride Maya thanked Nikhil. That night Ranjan phoned Maya. She had expected him to talk to her – ask her how she was, whether she was missing him. She wanted him to tell her that he was missing her, and all the time thinking of her. She had hoped to hear at least a little concern. But what all Ranjan had done was call her and issue instructions. It indicated his lack of interest in her. They lived like brothers or sisters or flatmates and not as husband and wife at all. Hence, Maya always felt that Ranjan had married her to satisfy his mother and she had married him only to get away from Calcutta.

Ranjan returned from his trip when his office business was over. They started living as usual. There was no change in their daily
routine. But one day Nikhil went to Maya to inform her about his birthday. He caught her and kissed her. The kiss was so focused and complete that Maya immediately surrendered to him. Since then her mind was dominated by Nikhil. In fact, Nikhil brought a little colour into Maya’s life. Maya was thrilled by that sex experience with Nikhil. It had affected her terribly and made her to forget the world around. But unfortunately her happiness was short-lived as Pushpa, Nikhil’s mother came to Maya and announced her son Nikhil’s engagement with Anshu. All the dreams and hopes of Maya were crushed and shattered and once again she was doomed to dull and boring life destined to her.

Thematically these novels can be classified into the following three groups: firstly, Socialite Evenings and Second Thoughts are the novels that deal with the themes such as Family, Marriage, Patriarchy, Search for Identity, Struggle for Survival and Marginality. Secondly, Starry Nights, Sisters and Strange Obsession move around the life in film industry, Bollywood - lust and sex. And finally, the novels Sultry Days and Snapshots present the emancipation of women and project the ultra-modern life-style of Neo-rich people.

Shobha De belongs to the post-colonial Indian women writers who, according to, Lakshmisree Banerjee (1995-96: 128) have:
Outgrown their earlier plagiaristic and assimilative modes, which mainly seemed to an extension of male literature or established forms of such writings. Indian women, writing in English today, are an urbane, sophisticated and intellectually alert lot with a proper English education, hence they have become more innovative, experimental, confessional and realistic than they were ever before, their creative efforts being largely fresh and experience based.

Shobha De differs considerably from other Indian women novelists in English because she believes in a very frank narration of incidents and openheartedness. Nothing is reserved in her fiction. As a result, the orthodox people in India criticize her for her open discussion of sexual matters. But she is the last person to care for what the orthodox readers say about the subject-matter of her fiction. In fact, all classes of people not only in India but all over the world read and enjoy her fiction. It is no less achievement.

As a woman novelist, Shobha De has focused on the marginalization of women in Indian society. She has great understanding of the depth of the psyche of woman and her problems. She explores the world of urban woman and emphatically says that even in the modern times with all socio-political as well as economic achievements, the graph of woman exploitation is shockingly rising.
Sometimes due to the unavoidable circumstances in their lives, women are pushed into the net by their protectors while at other times their high ambition and will to assert their freedom endanger them. Shobha De’s women don’t believe in suffering submissively. They struggle with all their strength to reach the peak of joy and success in male-dominated society. They revolt and shape their destiny by living for themselves and earnestly protest against subordination.

Shobha De is undoubtedly a feminist as the important concern of all her writings is ‘Woman’. It is the woman who occupies the central place in her fictional world. But her women characters do not belong to the first ‘FEMININE’ phase. As a feminist Shobha De belongs to the third phase of 1920 onwards, which Elaine Showalter has described as the ‘FEMALE’. It is the phase of self-discovery, search for identity and liberation. However, her protagonists do not remain fixed to one phase. Instead, they transcend from the ‘FEMINIST’ towards the FEMALE, that is, from the stage of protest against the patriarchal modes towards the process of self-discovery. As a writer of women-centred fiction, Shobha De is aware of the fact that the most remarkable difference between man and woman lies in woman’s sexuality. She opines that if a woman has to establish a true identity of her own, she must shatter the economic, socio-political and cultural barriers imposed upon her by various forces since time
immemorable. Her novels clearly reveal her attempts to shatter the dominant patriarchal values in the Indian society. In this male-dominated society, women from their childhood are made to learn how to compromise and adjust with secondary status. Adolescent stage makes them think that their desires will be fulfilled in their marriages for they look at marriage as a solution to their problems. But in reality, marriage shatters all their dreams and they suffer miserably in their marital lives. And this confusing situation compels them sometimes to take such step, which is a major deviation from the established traditional norms.

Shobha De’s preoccupation with different aspects of woman’s life makes her portray a variety of women from the traditional, subjugated and marginalized to the extremely modern and liberated. This variety of women depicted in her novels brings out different ways in which these women are subjected to male hegemony. It also shows the types of protests registered by these women against patriarchal male-domination. An interesting feature of Shobha De’s portrayal of these women is the presence of subgroups of women, within the main group, that may be highly liberated, oppressive and dominating. They include the modern and the traditional Indian middle-class women. The novelist has very cleverly projected the glamorous images of the attractive, independent and highly
professional women trying to dominate the power structure. But the outward glory of life these women seem to enjoy is marked by frustration and disgust. It is an outcome of their deviant behaviour. The traditional Indian women, inspite of feeling hopeless and suffocated, try to adjust themselves in the social system prescribed by the male dominated race, milieu and momentum. As a result, Shobha De realistically presents the images of different types of women in her fiction.

The present study attempts to make comprehensive critical comments on the fiction of Shobha De with an emphasis on the image of woman portrayed in her novels. It aims to assess her novels published upto 1996 and explore the versatile personality of Shobha De. It is also intended to show how Shobha De is different from other Indian women writers in English. Since it seeks to explore and explicate overall images of women appeared in her novels, it would be a fascinating study from the Indian point of view. As the present study is restricted only to her novels, more emphasis would be on the image of woman with critical comments regarding the new emerging woman of modern India. For this, some references, if needed, will be taken from her non-fiction, columns and interviews.
REFERENCES


36. Ibid., P. 15.

37. Ibid., P. 20.

38. Ibid., P. 84.
