CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture, and transform.

Diane Mariechild.

Women are an integral part of human civilization. No society or country can ever progress without active participation of women in its overall development. Women who constitute half of the world’s population are not treated on par with men. They are suppressed, oppressed, and marginalized in the matter of sharing the available opportunities for fulfilment of their lives, despite the fact that every woman works for the development of her family, her husband, and children. This picture of women is not something new or unique only to India. This is the predicament of women all over the world. Ernestine in Women in India observes:

Humanity recognizes no sex; mind recognizes no sex; Life and death, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery recognize no sex. Like man, woman comes involuntarily into existence; like him, she possesses physical, and mental, and moral powers… like him she has to pay the penalty for disobeying nature’s laws, and far greater penalties she has to suffer from ignorance…. Like men she also enjoys or suffers with her country. Yet she is not recognized as his equal! (11)

Over the centuries all civilizations, and cultures have created characteristic images of women in the areas of their sway. The images of women in Indian civilization, culture, and mythology are as diverse as the geographical, historical, and other influences that have shaped them.
A short historical survey of the construction, and representation of Indian women from colonial times to the present may be useful to understand the conflicting roles imposed on the contemporary Indian women.

During the Vedic Period women were treated with dignity, and respect in all matters – religious, social, political, and economical. Women’s education was encouraged, and a woman meant for learning was addressed as ‘Yognopavatini’. Wives of great Rishis were encouraged to take part in intellectual discussions. Women were permitted to attend important assemblies, functions, religious duties, and rituals, and take up profession as priests. Both men, and women together offered their worship showing the fact that they were equal in status. Women distinguished themselves in arts, science, and in political events. They were honoured, and termed as ‘Grihalakshmis’. In Ramesh Chunder Dutt’s *History of Ancient India*, the Vedic woman was the highest symbol of Hindu womanhood:

Women were honoured in ancient India, more perhaps than among any other ancient nation on the face of the globe. They were considered the intellectual companions of their husbands . . . affectionate helpers in the journey of life, and . . . inseparable partners in their religious duties. (67)

Throughout the Vedic Period, women were given a status equal to that of men. Gargi, Ghosha, Godha, Vishwavara, Apala, Lopamudra, Bhirwara, Arundhati etc., were learned women while scholars like Sulaba Maithreye, Vachaknave, Leelavathi were great mathematicians. Khaana was a well known astronomer. During this period, women were permitted to learn grammar, and fine arts like dance, painting, and vocational courses like spinning, thread-making, lace-making, and weaving. Marryable age was between fourteen, and seventeen years. Educated girls had the option of choosing their life partners through ‘Swayamvara’ which was a common
accepted way of selecting their grooms among Kshatriya communities. Women were regarded with due respect in every sphere of life, and they were not subject to any of the miraculous laws of an unsympathetic society during the Vedic age. In the subsequent years, there had been a gradual decline in the status of women.

During the Atharvaveda Period, people showed strong preference for males. The birth of a son was welcomed. The common belief was that a son would save his father from the hell called ‘Punnama Narakam’. There was not a single word for the daughter. A wife was asked to be the mother of sons alone. As a woman’s destiny depended on her sons, it was natural for her to perform penances for begetting them. The position of a girl worsened. It was said that a wife is a comrade, a daughter, a misery, and a son, a light in the highest heaven. The daughter was described as a ‘trust’ of her father later to become the ‘property’ of her husband. The status, and position of women degraded, and deteriorated with the passage of time.

During the Mughal Period, the position of women went down due to lack of education, and introduction of child marriage. Series of invasions by foreigners jeopardized the security of women’s life. Women were carried away as commodities by the invaders. Jauhar, Sati, Purdah came into being, further impinging on the social liberties of women.

During the Buddhist Period, there was an equal status between men, and women in society. Further this period allowed women to be educated, to travel as missionaries, and even to remain unmarried. Buddha’s respect for human beings served to raise the position of women. Marriage was not a compulsive sacrament, but a secular, social, and economical contract which duly recognized the equality of the sexes, and did not fetter women. Child marriage, Sati etc., were discarded. This
period believed in the individual independence, and right to ultimate liberation. So women became truly unshackled.

Followed by the Buddhist Period was the Jainism Period. This period offered women the best opportunities for intellectual, and aesthetic cultivation. Later, during the period of Sikhism, men were exhorted to hold women in high esteem, and to cherish them. Entry of Islam into India brought down the status of women. The Purdah System followed by Islam prevented women from participating in public affairs or recreational pursuits. Women were confined to serve for the family, and to provide pleasure, and relaxation to men. This double standard targeting women was in accordance with the then prevailing social dispensation. A feeling of insecurity pervaded. Women of this period were privileged as a measure to safeguard themselves. They were expected to be devoted, and submissive, docile, and tolerant. James Mill in *Marriage and Society*, sharply points out the status of Indian women:

Nothing can exceed the habitual contempt which Hindus entertain for their women. Hardly are they ever mentioned in their laws or other books, but as wretches of the most base and vicious inclinations. On whose nature no virtuous or useful qualities can be engrafted. (281)

Sri Aurobindo in *The Foundation of Indian Culture*, grieved at the degraded position of the Indian women:

In India the women had at first a free and more dignified position than in Greece and Rome, but the slave was soon replaced by the proletariat, called in India the Sudhra, and the increasing tendency to deny the highest benefits of the common life and culture to the Sudhra and the woman brought down Indian society to the level of the Western conquerors. (103-104)
During this Jainism Period, the English Missionaries had applied themselves to social reforms. They were active in putting a stop to social evils like Sati, infanticide, forced labour, and slavery. At the dawn of this period, Indian women were in a sorry state. The Vedic liberties enjoyed by them were long forgotten.

The autobiography of Rushsundari Debi’s *My Life*, and Pandita Ramabai’s *The High Caste Hindu Woman* analysed the status of women in nineteenth century India. Ramabai’s account is devastating as it divides the life of a woman into three stages, childhood, married life, and widowhood, each stage replete with sorrow, and travails. In her analysis of the place of women in society, she states that women as mothers were honoured but as wives were classed with cows, female camels, and slave girls. A wife mistreated by her husband had no rights outside her marital status. In fact women did not inherit their fathers’ land, and had no rights over the property of their husbands; they had no income of their own, and even women of upper caste were economically dependent. Thus the works of Rushsundari Debi, and Pandita Ramabai analysed the status of women in nineteenth century India.

Jotirao Phule, the nineteenth century reformer, bracketed the Brahmin woman with the Sudra or lower castes as victims of patriarchal domination. Tanika Sarkar points out in *A Modern Autobiography* that the standard domestic regulations included an early marriage before puberty so that the garbhadhan ceremony or ritual cohabitation with the husband would be performed as soon as the girl entered puberty. An indissoluble, non-consensual marriage with a man of any age, who could have more wives, met a further oppressive set of rules, and regulations. A widow’s lot was worse, and her widowhood was considered a retribution for crimes committed in her previous life. Sati, in fact, was seen as a reprieve, and release from a life of ignominy, and harassment. Women were denied access to education.
The situation needed reform, and the birth of Social Reform Movement, and the Nationalist Movement during the colonial rule in India paved the way to create awareness of the need for the improvement in women’s condition. These movements encouraged the women’s right to education, their right to divorce, and widow remarriage. This period saw major movements for Strishiksha, and Women’s Education. The reconstruction, and regeneration of the Indian women became imperative. The first school for girls was started by British, and American missionaries in the 1810s. The debate in this area was whether education for women should be in English mores, and customs or Indian traditions. On the other hand there was an outcry against Anglicization. Women’s issues, their emancipation, and struggle, were fought with nationalist uprisings.

Swami Vivekananda in *Hinduism* best expressed the role of the Indian woman, and the crossroads she stood at by the end of the nineteenth century:

> There lie before her various strange luxuries... new manners, new fashions, dressed in which she moves about the well educated girls in shameless freedom... again the scene changes and in its place appear, with stern presence Sita, Savitri, austere religious vows, fastings... and the search for the self. On the one side is the independence of Western Society, on the other the extreme self-sacrifice of the Aryan Society. (77)

The success of the call given by Mahatma Gandhi to incorporate women in the freedom struggle rested on woman’s avatar as a self-sacrificing, enduring, courageous being. This freedom struggle period headed by Gandhi saw a rise in Durga pujas. Kali, Durga, and Chandi became the three eminent goddesses associated with
nationalism. A connection was established between revolutionary goddesses Kali, and Durga, who represented aspects of energy, nature, and action – with both the protective, and destructive aspects of Shakthi. The participation of women in the country’s freedom struggle, and outside their homes was made easier with this association. Women represented unsullied purity, untainted by western mores, and norms, and through education they became powerful to fight against foreign powers. The nationalists extended the role of women as mothers, and motherhood defined women as home makers, mothers of the nation, and mothers of the future sons of the country. Kaparia in *Marriage and Family in India* said:

I charge you restore to your women their ancient rights, for, as I have said, it is we, and not you, who are the real nation-builders … . Educate your women and the nation will take care of itself, for it is as true today as it was yesterday and will be to the end of human life that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. (65)

Further Kaparia in the same work added:

It is suitable that I who represent the other sex, that is, the mothers of the men whom we wish to make men and not emasculated machines, should raise a voice on behalf of the future mothers of India. In fact women may form a sisterhood more easily because they are bound to every woman in the world by the common divine quality of motherhood. (77)

All India Women’s Organizations were established around 1910, and until 1920 they served as forums for discussions, and reforms.
The inception of the women’s movement can be traced not to a radical awakening but to a gradual enlightenment about the role to be played by women both in the home, and in the nation. Their ‘heroic role’ was defined by reference to the past, mythic women, and to contemporary freedom fighters like Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhayaya, Aruna Asif Ali, and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. Each highlighted an aspect of the idealized Indian women. Gender was an important issue to a post-colonial nation, and culture. The Constitution in independent India declared the equality of men, and women, and enjoined upon every citizen the duty to renounce any practice derogatory to women. Proposals for radical changes in laws relating to marriage, and succession culminated in the parliament passing four acts of the Hindu Code Bill – the Special Marriage Act, the Hindu Marriage Act, the Hindu Seccession Act, and the Adoption, and Maintenance Act. The Bill raised the age of consent in marriage, and gave women the rights to divorce. This was the status of women in pre-independent India.

Women’s issues in post-independent India were complex, and more complicated, and encompass a range of issues relating to work, wages, civil rights, sex, violence, representation, caste, class, and health. The self definition of the middle class urban woman is further problematised. She lives in a society where tradition is an integral part of daily life, and enjoin codes of cultural behaviour. The actualization of a self, and identity is counterpointed against the established norms of a patriarchal society. Throughout ages women in India have faced gruesome atrocities. One side of history shows the faith among the Indians about ‘Shakti’ or the ‘Women Power’ to be the strongest energy whereas the other side of history is coloured in black, grey shades of dowry, child marriage, Sati, and other related mal practices.
Modern educated women have become independent but their responsibilities have increased. A modern Indian woman has to provide income as well as perform household duties to support her family. During marriage a woman’s family background, and property still plays a major role for acquiring a good alliance. The question remains whether women have really acquired independence through education or have become scapegoats to new kinds of exploitation. The answers to these questions are difficult. Education surely makes them aware of their rights but social conditioning makes them believe the unacceptable norms of the society to be their duties.

Although it is scientifically proven, that it is the man who is the sole determinant of the sex of the child to be born, a wife is discarded; a daughter-in-law is abolished for not giving birth to a boy child. The gender bias is prevalent in workplaces also. A talented, and intelligent woman faces mental abuses from her male seniors who consider her as to be a potential threat to their designation. Physical abuse, and exploitation is present to some extent in glamour industries. But predominantly, women face the glass-ceiling effect. Despite of talent, and skills a woman employee gets less number of promotions, and her wages are often lesser than her male colleagues.

Child marriage, and Sati are still prevalent in state like Rajasthan. Denying a girl her right to live, and to live happily are heinous crimes of the same nature. But sadly, even in the twenty first century India, women struggle to find their right place. Dowry deaths have not become a talk of the past nor has woman’s secondary status elevated to equal.
Before independence, conventional Indian women who were not really concerned about their oppression, and equal rights did not feel the need for an organized rebellion. But after independence, due to women’s education many movements were organized to fight for women’s rights to equal with men. These movements also saw emancipation of women which includes physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and moral liberation of women. They demanded more humane treatment for women. Impelled by an urge to seek a new, and just way of life, women began to voice freely their feelings, and experiences. Exposure to these activities, and movements women started to get empowerment. This played significant role in bringing a change in the attitude, and position of women in India. The following paragraphs examine the concept of ‘empowerment’, and its emergence.

Empowerment is a process wherein, the powerless or dis-empowered gain a greater share of the control of resources, and decision making. Since women are generally accepted as being the most dis-empowered, even among the oppressed classes, the term ‘women empowerment’ has come to be associated with women’s struggle for social justice, and equality.

The mid 1980s saw the term ‘empowerment’ becoming popular in the field of development especially in reference to women. Empowerment of women, in its simplest form, means the redistribution of power that challenges patriarchal ideology, and male dominance. It is both a process, and a result of the process. Empowerment essentially entails the transformation of the structure or institutions that reinforce, and perpetuate gender discrimination. It is a process that enables women to gain access to, and control of material as well as information resources. However, empowerment for women begins in the household with equality, autonomy, and respect. Achieving
equality between men, and women in the family is the foundation on which empowerment in other areas is based.

The most prominent feature of the term empowerment is that it contains the word ‘power’. In the words of Batliwala as revealed in *Empowerment of Women in South Asia*:

> It implies control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. The material assets over which control can be established may be of any type - physical, knowledge, information and ideas. Control over ideology signifies the ability to generate, capacity to propagate, sustain and institutionalize specific sets of beliefs, principles, values, attitudes, actions and behaviours. This control in turn, confers the power of decision-making. The process of challenging existing power relations and gaining greater control over the sources of power may be termed empowerment. (223)

The process of empowerment will imply transformation of gender relations within the family, and society. That is, equality of status, and of opportunities of sexes need to be accepted, and implemented in its full amount. Empowerment is a process of awareness, and capacity building, and challenging patriarchal values, and forces which marginalize women, and make them subordinate. It leads to greater participation, greater decision-making power, and control. Thus the process of empowerment essentially entails individual self-assertion, and collective struggle to redistribute gender relations within the family, and the society. The focus of ‘empowerment’ is that it relegates the responsibility of initiating change, raising question, and taking initiative to the poor. Role of different agencies – state,
administrative agencies, political parties, social institutions in facilitating or providing the true space for the women to move from a position of passive acceptation to active participation, is critical.

Saraswati Haider in *Empowerment of Women: A Misconstruct* cautions, so much that the strategies like ‘empowerment of women’ is designed as a goal to free women of gender oppression. Haider further examines the National Policy for Women, which the Government of India formulated in 1996, as a full-fledged strategy towards upliftment of women. Empowerment of women is thus a challenging social process. It meets with stiff resistance in a patriarchal society. However, with increased awareness, self-confidence, and collective strength, women have already initiated the process.

It is said that literature reflects society. Literature always has its lion’s share in bringing, projecting, and highlighting the changes in the society. The characters portrayed in literature are model members of real human beings of its time. In order to know the exceptional traits, and general approaches of a society at a particular time, it is enough to make a thorough study of the characters, and society represented by literature of the time. The following passages aim at examining the role of literature in exploring the empowerment of women.

The Indian Writing in English from its inception is closely connected with the growth, and development of India as a nation. Indian English Literature pertains to that body of work by writers from India, who pen strictly in the English language, and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous regional, and indigenous languages of India.
Indian Writing in English is defined by Jaydipsingh Dodiya in *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English* as:

Original creative writing produced in English by Indian writers or writers of Indian origin, resident or expatriate, for whom English will normally be a second language but who have in all probability been educated, even within India, in English-medium schools and universities, and are likely to write English more fluently than any native Indian language. This very particular set of conditions, inherited from the Raj but carried on beyond Independence to the present day, in no way makes these writers any less Indian: in most cases they are representing the lives, conversations and thoughts of Indian characters who more often than not are presumed to be speaking and thinking not in English at all, but in a plurality of Indian languages. (77)

In the beginning, political writing in the novel or essay format was dominant, as can be seen in Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and his extraordinary output. He had written, and dedicated pages about social reform, and religion in India, solely in the medium of English.

In early times of British rule, the novelists’ writing had tremendously arrested attention of the native masses. The man that comes to surface more than once in all the genres of Indian English Literature is Rabindranath Tagore, who possibly was an unending ocean of knowledge, and intellect. Tagore also had written some poems in English. However, there is no denying the fact that Indian Writings in English were extremely few far between. Jawaharlal Nehru, and M.K. Gandhi were also great masters of the English language. Nehru’s *Discovery of India, Glimpses of World*
History etc., are glaring testimonies not only to his profound scholarship but also his absolute mastery over writing lucid prose in the foreign language. Gandhiji used the language in his writings with utmost precision, and dexterity.

They were followed by the great triumvirate of Mulkraj Anand, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan, who were the first to make Indian Writing in English popular among a sizable section of our English educated people. They primarily wrote fiction, and their elegant styles soon caught the imagination of the common reader. Indian Writing in English had finally arrived in the 1930s after a marginal existence for over a century. Literature plays an effective role in the progress of the society. Northrop Frye in his *The Critical Path* states:

> Over the situation of man in society, his place in the universe and his ultimate destiny, the humanities and social sciences show a similar concern, but literature does this through an intense vision. Literature is not detached but concerned. It deals with what is there in terms of what man wants and does not want. (91)

Literature has intimate contact with the life of the people, their joys, sorrows, and attitude to life. The writers’ attitude to their experience as well as to society is commonly reflected in their literary work. Through literature the author exhibits the problems of his age. Raymond Williams has pointed out in *The Long Revolution*, “There is an undeniable relationship between literature, and society. As a society changes, its literature changes... for it is a part of social growth, and not simply its reflection” (528).
As a matter of truth Syed Fazle Rab in *Sociology of Literature* states:

The range of social influences on literature is as broad as the entire range of operative social forces; the prevailing system of social organisation - including the class structure, the economic system, the political organizations, the dominant ideas, the characteristics and the emotional tone, the sense of the past and the pattern of future . . . myths and their relation to contemporary realities. (3)

Just as social systems, and processes influence literature, literature in turn brings about changes in the attitudes, opinions, and behaviour of the people in a society. It criticizes, and portrays the moral standard of the society, and provokes the people to rebel against the useless moral codes. Literature gives a detailed picture of the social condition, and the social, religious economic, and domestic problems.

Recent years have witnessed a good number of Indian English fiction writers who have stunned the literary world with many liberational works. Their works have enriched the world literature, and they have been awarded with accolades, and prizes in the field of literature. Of all the literary forms, the novel may be said to be the most society-oriented genre.

Novelists writing in English in India, in particular, display a special eagerness towards presenting Indian societal conditions. In the words of Boulton in his *The Anatomy of Novel*, it is revealed that, “We are drawn to fiction not only by the fun of fantasy, but by our interest in reality” (5).
K. B. Vaid in *Modern Indian Novel* made a comment on the themes of the Indian novelists:

The main thematic preoccupations of the Indian novelists are: portrayal of poverty, hunger and disease, portrayal of widespread social evils and tensions, examinations of the survivals of the past, exploration of the hybrid culture of the educated Indian middle classes, analysis of the innumerable dislocations and conflicts in a tradition - ridden society under the impact of an incipient, half-hearted industrialisation. (67)

Socio-political realities form the major themes in most of the Indian novels. Though it is called Indian fiction the situations are not fictional but are drawn from reality. The characters are imaginary but the feelings, and the emotions they possess are not imaginary. They give importance to social problems faced by the individuals, and the Indian novels are almost like social documentaries rather than being called fictional. T.D. Brunton in *Indian in Fiction - The Heritage of Indianness* describes the Indian scene thus:

India had many of the cultural conditions favourable to the novel before she came into contact with Europe. But now she has social forces actively favourable. To the production of fiction – a large audience, an educated class, a new questioning of age old socio-religious dogma and a consuming urge for knowledge and interpretation of society. (214)

At this juncture, a discussion on feminist literature in English would be appropriate. Feminism is a protest movement launched by women of the West for equal social, political, legal, moral, and cultural rights with men. It is an anti-
masculine movement of the women, by the women, and for the women. It remains as a protest movement against the suppression of women’s rights.

The term ‘feminism’ has its origin from the Latin word ‘femina’ meaning ‘woman’, and thereby refers to the promotion of women’s right, status, and power at par with men. In other words, it relates to the belief that women should have the same social economic, and political rights as men. Kanwar Dinesh Singh defines feminism in *Feminism and Post feminism* as:

Feminism is, indeed, a serious attempt to analyze, comprehend and clarify how and why femininity or the feminine sensibility is different from masculinity or the masculine experience. Feminism brings into perspective the points of difference that characterize the ‘feminine identity’ or ‘feminine psyche’ or ‘feminity’ of woman. It can be studied by taking into account the psychosomatic, social and cultural construction of femininity vis-a-vis masculinity. (3)

The rise of feminism in Europe in the seventeenth, and the eighteenth centuries, is related to the economic prosperity of the new conventional resulting in the use of servants to perform the domestic work. In the nineteenth century, feminism remained as a protest movement against the suppression of women’s right. In the twentieth century, it expressed itself as a new perspective movement which came into existence in India trying to redefine woman’s role in the society. Feminism in Indian English fiction has a series of counters on the part of woman to strike at the roots, to belong, and assert her ideality in a transitional society. It is evident that feminism attempts to explore a new social order to find pertinent resolves to the real life problems in the light of traditionally-gendered role-playing. Feminism soon entered
the academic circles, and became an important subject of literary debate, and discussion.

Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* came out in 1929 with a more professed, and detailed programme for the emancipation of women. She says that what is required most for a woman is economic independence, and privacy in the house so that she may be able to think, and write what she likes. Virginia Woolf’s importance as a novelist gave succour to the feminist concern of the day.

Simone De Beavoir came out with a bold proposal for a frontal attack on the patriarchal domination in our society. In her famous work, *The Second Sex* she has like a furious rebel, hit hard at the androcentric customs, and conventions, art, and culture, philosophy, and religion which have always assigned the women the secondary or rather unquestioning position to men. She says that man considers himself to be the subject, the absolute, while woman, the other.

Elaine Showalter has identified three phases of modern women’s literary development: the feminine phase (1840 - 1880), during which women writers imitated the dominant male traditions. The second one is the feminist phase (1880 - 1920), when women advocated for their rights, and the female phase (1920 - present) which emphasizes the rediscovery of women’s texts, and women. In her *Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness*, she says that if the feminist approach is to be more effective it must be more structured to compete. As a result of such pronouncements, feminism developed into a full-grown international movement, and began to declare its claims in all the fields of life, and that at all the suitable fora.
The protest was voiced in many forms not only by women writers but male writers like Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Manohar Malgonkar etc., who dwell on the tortured womanhood. Tagore, in his novels brought woman out of the kitchen. Rabindranath Tagore’s protagonists are half through their self-realization. Mulk Raj Anand places his women in the novel, in a socio-cultural milieu of a stiflingly conventional Hindu society, where she is doomed to a life of degradation, and dehumanization, and life of mental subjugation, and conditioned responses. R. K. Narayan projects the lop-sided family of Ramani, in his novel the Dark Room (1972) there is very little understanding between husband, and wife. Narayan marks the man - woman relationship on the marital plane in his Dark Room, and The English Teacher, and the extra-marital plane is seen in his The Guide, The Vendor of Sweets, and The Painter of Signs. Manohar Malgonkar’s The Princess, and A Bend in the Ganges picture Maharani, and Sundari respectively, struggling against the tyranny of tradition.

The emergence of women writers during this period is of great significance. Rosalind Miles in The Female Form quotes:

Still the task of interpretation of women’s experience cannot be left to male writers alone, however sympathetic they may be. The female perspective expressed through women’s writing of all kinds is more than a valuable corrective to an all male view of the universe. For women readers, it is a lifeline. (ix)

Indian women also started writing novels, and making writing as their profession. Moreover, Indian women novelists have turned towards the woman’s world with great introspective intensity, and authenticity. They have launched a
voyage within to explore the private consciousness of their women characters, and to measure them. P. Ramamoorthy in *My Life is my own – A Study of Shashi Deshpande’s Women* tells, “A woman who writes of women's experience often brings in some aspects of those experiences that have angered her, roused her strong feeling” (7).

The well-known poem *An Introduction* by Kamala Das, brings out the candour, and valour with which she made a fun of the inhibitions, and taboos laid upon the Indian women. She gave birth to a long line of women writers in India, mostly in the dominion of fiction. She wanted women to have all the rights enjoyed by men in any matter whatsoever, including sex. She says that if extra-marital relations are interpreted in the male world as take-over of women, the same honour should be bestowed upon women for doing the same. In her book *My Story* she frankly mentions her extra-marital relations.

Authors like Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Markandaya, and Anita Desai have chosen the problems, and issues faced by women in today’s male dominated world as the main theme of their books. Kamala Markandaya makes her woman a domineering professor, and an active victimizer of an adolescent male. She pictures a woman’s world where the man is manipulated, purchased, commanded, exploited, and taken around like a pet. Some of the novels of Anita Desai like *Voices in the City*, and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* have portrayed the complexities between a man - woman relationship. She has tried to explore the psychological aspects of the protagonists. These two novelists Kamala Markandaya, and Anita Desai captured the spirit of Indian cultures, and its traditional values.
Anita Desai, differs from other women novelists, through her method of the psychological exploration of her women protagonists, who are essentially lonely, and sensitive. The isolation, and insecurity that her characters suffer is human, and the growth of women is from self-alienation to self-identification. These two women novelists deal with the urban upper class women.

In the novels of Nayantara Sahgal, women are no more goddesses or an automation, they are human beings, and move from bondage to freedom, from indecision to self-assertion, from weakness to strength. Nayantra Sahgal delineates with keen perception, and sensitivity the problems, and suffering of women in marriage, who feel entrapped, oppressed, and doomed to the care of husband, and home, and shows her own reaction in her novels. Most of her women are aware of the injustice done to them in marriage.

Jai Nimbkar deals with the middle class married woman’s identity crisis in the contemporary male dominated Indian society. The novels of Shobha De are really outspoken. She projects woman as a creative force that controls the dynamics of the society. Her women oppose the three Ms. They are marriage, motherhood, and monotony. Most of these female novelists are known for their bold views that are reflected in their novels. Basically, these are the novels of protest, and an outburst of reservations, and contaminations. C. Vijayasree in Revisionist Myth Making: The Post Modern Indian English Novel points out the revisionist approach of the women writers, “Instead of rejecting tradition, women writers began to reclaim a new lineage, and forge a gynocentric heritage. Revisionist myth making as re-invention of tradition figures prominently in the works of women writers in the eighties” (176).
Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*, won the 1997 Booker Prize, and became an international best-seller overnight. This novel which is set against the conservative Indian society, highlights the fact that women too are human beings with dreams, desires, and passion, and will go a long way in upholding their nobility, and dignity. This novel attacks patriarchy, and exposes the double standards prevalent in society. At the same time, it brings out the misery that women, and children undergo. Mini Chandy in “The Love Laws”, *Explorations: Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things* has made a very fine assessment of the novel in the following lines:

Roy’s novels is the eye opener and meant to educate the so-called traditionalists who remain inflexible and refuse to acknowledge the fact that there is more to life than the given social norms of civilized society. Certain rules and regulations are essential in life but at times one has to rise above the mere technicalities of what is ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ and probe deeper so as to relate to an emotion as basic and sublime as unconditional love. (91)

Thus feminism became popular struggling for securing woman’s suffrage or voting rights etc. It became a well organized socio-political movement for women’s emancipation from the patriarchal oppression. By John Abraham’s opinion in *Feminism and our Fiction*:

Feminism challenges the traditional view of women as the weaker sex and the belief that her place is in the kitchen. It assumes the equality of the sexes and seeks to achieve for women a role in society which such equality warrants. This has led to a rethinking on gender relations reflected in literature and in life. (20)
According to N. Krishnaswamy in *Contemporary Literary Theory: A Student's Companion*:

The first wave feminism has been the political movement for women's rights. The second wave feminism relates to the historical context of patriarchy and oppression and attacks the male domination in aggressive, militant tone. The third wave feminism challenges the gender discrimination and attempts to find a rationale for the identities of masculinity and femininity. The fourth wave feminism is termed postmodern feminism and may be called 'post-feminism', which lays emphasis on individual woman's inner freedom and awakening. It tries to resolve the issues and problems raised by feminism and attempts to understand the relationship of interdependence between man and woman. (77)

The term 'post-feminism' has become an umbrella term to cover a variety of concepts. Besides the egalitarian perspectives, it covers the concepts of the 'brave new world', 'the girlpower', 'cyberspace', 'androgyne', 'pluralism', and to a certain extent the principle of 'multiculturalism'. The 'brave new world', and the 'girlpower' refer to the world of young women who are bold, self-confident, self-assured, and competitive, and do not require the crutches of feminism to secure space for themselves.

To put it in a nutshell, it could be said that Indian women novelists have given a new dimension to the Indian literature. They have incorporated the recurring female experiences in their writings which have affected the cultural, and language patterns
of Indian literature. They have brought a stylized pattern in the whole context of Indian writing.

Majority of the Indian readers comprising both male, and female read the novels of the Indian women authors with certain expectations. They look for some ‘Indianness’ in their write-ups. There are few important writers who convey the message of feminism in an Indian way. One important writer is Shashi Deshpande, the living dynamic woman writer who occupies a prominent position in Indian English Literature. She is one of those shimmering stars whose writings have created a niche in the world of literature. As a writer, she has voiced her stance as effective contributor to the society through her works. Her approach is different from that of all other feminists. She has treated the typical Indian themes very sensitively, and has pictured the contemporary middle class women with rare competence. The main themes in her novels are about inner conflict, search for identity, parent, and child relationship, and the concept of marriage, and sex. Deshapande’s authorial self is intensely plagued by a deep sense of her isolation, and writes out of a step with the mainstream writing. She has no fixed models in texts or author in the total field of Indian English Fiction, to follow, and wonders where she belongs to. Her works, therefore makes an outstanding contribution to Indian Literature in English.

Woman’s struggles 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 novels. Recounting the influences in her life, she says in Of Concern, Of Anxieties, “There are three things in my early life that have shaped me as a writer.
These are: That my father was a writer, that I was educated exclusively in English, and that I was born a female” (107).

Shashi Deshpande writes not only for herself, but also for the society, its tradition, its life, and she living in it. She is concerned on what the society does to the individual. As a writer she thinks of reforming the society, and influencing her reader.

In Jaiswal’s The Role of Writer To-day, Shashi Deshpande says that:

It’s a solitary quest, involving at least in its intentions, and its beginnings, none else. Nevertheless, the idea of the writer as some kind of an activist, as a social reformer, is very strongly entrenched in our minds and writing which espouses a cause often becomes significant. Any writing that upholds the cause of the downtrodden, the poor, the tribal, the woman act, is much applauded, it gets significance. (5)

For, over a long period of time Shashi Deshpande wants to be recognized on being called simply ‘a writer’, and not ‘a woman writer’, and also not as ‘a feminist writer.’ She believed, and maintained that she writes about person-to-person, and person to society relationships. She wants, that she should not be evaluated by gender, and she as an author is always beyond male, and the female dichotomy.

Shashi Deshpande certainly objects being called as a feminist. But later, writing her latest novel, she changes her stance, and admits herself to be a feminist but only as a person, and certainly not as novelist. Shashi Deshpande writes about harsh, and controversial topics. She deals with the conflict between the idea women have for themselves, and the idea that society imposes on them.
Shashi Deshpande tells in *Writing from the Margin and Other Essays*:

I read enormously as a child; my passion for words was so great that I even read all the dictionaries at home …. I went through the books of Angela Brazil, Marie Corelli, Dickens and Dumas. With this reading I was laying the foundation for my future writing, though, of course, I had no idea of this then. (2)

Further Deshpande says in an interview with Lakshmi Holmstorm entitled *Talks to Lakshmi Holmstorm, the Fiction of Shashi Deshpande*:

I am a feminist, in my own life, I mean. But not consciously, as a novelist. I must also say that my feminism has come to me very slowly, very gradually and mainly out of any 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. I am feminist very much and I strongly react against any kind of cruelty or oppression, decimal of opportunities to women became they are women…the important thing is we have the right to live ourselves. (248)

Shashi Deshpande is the second daughter of the famous Kannada dramatist, and Sanskrit scholar, Adya Rangachar Sriranga. Her father was described as the Bernard Shaw of the Kannada theatre. Shashi Deshpande was born at Dharwad, Karnataka in 1938, and was educated in Dharwad, Bombay, and Bangalore. She did her B.A at Elphinstone College in 1956, and got degrees in Economics, and Law with a gold medal. Later she completed her M.A. at Mysore University.
Shashi Deshpande married Dr. Deshpande, a neuro-pathologist in 1962. She published her first short story in 1970. Three collections of her short stories *The Miracle, It was the Nightingale*, and *It was Dark and Other Short Stories* were published in 1986. *Intrusion and Other Short Stories* were published in 1993. Her works were published in *Femina, Eve's Weekly, Deccan Herald, The Illustrated Weekly of India, Mirror, Youth Times* etc.

Shashi Deshpande’s *The Miracle and Other Stories* was honoured with Sahitya Academy Award. *Intrusion and Other Stories* is a haunting new collection of nineteen short stories by her. In this book she explores a world darkened by the despair, and unhappiness of women trying to break out of predefined roles. When she was living in Bombay (today's Mumbai) she did a course on journalism at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, and worked for a couple of months as a journalist for the magazine *Onlooker*. She has also written the script, and screenplay for a prize-winning Hindi feature film *Drishti*, and translated a play. Her books have been published both in India, and abroad, and three of her novels have received awards, including the Sahitya Academy award, and the Nanjangud Thirumalamba award. *That Long Silence*, published by the Virago Press London, has established Shashi Deshapande as a reputed novelist of considerable worth.

Shashi Deshpande’s *Roots and Shadows*, received the major award “Thirumathi Rangamal” prize for the best Indian novel of 1982-83. *The Legacy*, a collection of short stories is a prescribed text for the graduate students in Columbia University. The novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* has been translated into German, and Russian languages. Apart from fiction, she has written a number of articles that have appeared in various national Indian newspapers, and magazines. She was on the Advisory Board of the Sahitya Academy for five years, and the chairperson of the
Jury for the Common Wealth Writer’s Prize, 2000. Recently to her credit, Shashi Deshpande has translated her daughter Gauri Deshpande’s work *Deliverance* a novella originally written in Marathi into English.


Shashi Deshpande is also the author of several perceptive essays, now available in a volume entitled *Writing from the Margin & Other Essays* (2003). Thought provoking, and engaging, this collection showcases, for the first time, the broad sweep of Shashi Deshpande’s non-fiction writing. Writing over the past three decades, her stories provide an insight into often forgotten aspects of human feelings, and relationships, weaving web of emotions. In 2009, she was honoured with the Padma Shri award. At present she lives in Bangalore with her pathologist husband.

Shashi Deshpande’s first novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980) tells the story of a marriage on the rocks. Saritha is a two-in-one woman who in the daytime is a successful doctor, and at night a terrified trapped animal in the hands of her husband, Manohar, who is an English teacher in a college. Saritha, unable to bear the sexual sadism of her husband, returns to her father’s house. The rest of the novel is remembrance of things past, and a brief confession to the father with whom she had hardly communicated before. The stay in her father’s house gives Saritha a chance to
review her relationship with her husband, her dead mother, her dead brother Dhruva, and her children, Renu, and Abhi. She remains unchanged till the end but she has a better understanding of herself, and others. This gives her courage to confront reality. Finally the dark no longer holds terror to Saritha.

*Roots and Shadows* (1983) explores the inner conflicts, and struggles of an educated woman who attempts to assert her individuality in a predominantly male world. Indu marries Jayant against the wishes of her family. Akka, the old rich family tyrant, and the other family members impose restrictions upon her, which she resents. She imagines that marriage with a person of her choice would bring her independence, but she is disillusioned. She comes back to her ancestral place to attend the funeral of Akka, and she is puzzled, and baffled by many questions. She has come back to look for her roots, but finds shadows instead.

*That Long Silence* (1988) is about Jeya, the protagonist who is a writer. She marries Mohan, an engineer. It is an arranged marriage. They are blessed with two children Rahul, and Rati. Jeya is trained to be an obedient wife. She lives according to the wish of her husband. Her story wins a prize. Mohan does not like that. After that Jeya gives up writing. Mohan is charged with corruption. So both of them come from their Churchgate home to Dadar flat. One day Mohan goes away from her. Jeya faces a crucial torture. But she is very confident that there will be a tremendous change in her life. Finally she realises that life can be made possible.

*Small Remedies* (2000), tells about Madhu, the protagonist, and the mother of her only son Adit. She is trying to get over the death of her son by writing the biography of the famous singer Savitribai (Bai), for which she has come to Bhavanipur where she is staying with a young couple, Hari, and Lata. On the one
hand, there is the actual story of Madhu, and what happens to her at Bhavanipur, like her visits to Savitribai, her bond with Lata, and Hari, the paralytic stroke that attacks Bai, and so on. All these are shown as happening in the present. On the other hand, there is the story of Savitribai, as told by Bai but re-interpreted by Madhu. There is a lot that is common to both Madhu, and Bai. Bai’s daughter Munni was Madhu’s childhood friend, and by a strange accident, she too was killed in the same bomb blast as her own son Adit. But Bai recognizes neither Munni as her daughter nor Madhu as Munni’s friend. Both of them are artists: one a novelist, the other a singer; both are childless mothers; thus Madhu’s attempts to bring out the woman or the mother behind the successful artist in Bai is really an attempt to understand her own self.

*A Matter of Time* (2001) revolves around an obscure pattern of relationships within a family across four generations. Manorama, Kalyani, Sumi, and Aru belong to four generations with different kinds of experience, and exposure in life. Deshpande places the broken marriage of Sumi, and Gopal as the centre of the novel, and compares it with other marriages of Manorama, and Vithalroa, and Kalyani, and Shripati. Gopal once loving, and caring husband of Sumi walks out of the family. Sumi with her three daughters Aru, Charu, and Seema returns to her parental house owned by her mother Kalyani. Sumi’s parents Kalyani, and Shripathi live in a strange relationship without talking to each other for the last thirty five years. Gopal, Sumi, Kalyani, and Shripati are fighting for their life with each other. Towards the end they are ready to accept what life has for them.

*The Binding Vine* (2002) begins with the protagonist Urmila’s grieving over the loss of her daughter. In the course of time, she gets involved, and finds relief from her personal pain in the predicament of two women – Mira, and Kalpana – one is her
mother-in-law, already dead, and the other one is a teenager, going through a death-in-life experience. Both Mira, and Kalpana in the novel are victims of rape.

In the saga of marriage, Mira suffered rape. Kalpana is a victim of gruesome rape, and lies unconscious for more than four months without a chance of recovery. The doctor’s casual report calls it an accident. Urmila wants justice to be done to Kalpana by bringing the culprit out. In the case of Mira, Urmila takes steps to publish Mira’s poems.

*Moving On* (2004) is a story that begins, conventionally enough, with a woman’s discovery of her father’s diary. As Manjari unlocks the past through its pages, rescuing old memories, and recasting events, and responses, the present makes its own demands: a rebellious daughter, devious property sharks, and a lover who threatens to throw her life out of gear again. The ensuing struggle to reconcile nostalgia with reality, and the fire of the body with the desire for companionship races to an unexpected resolution, twisting, and turning through complex emotional landscapes.

*In the Country of Deceit* (2008), Devayani the protagonist decides to live alone in the small town of Rajnur after her parent’s death. She works as an English teacher. She meets Rani, a former actress, who has settled in the town with her husband, and three children. Out of her loneliness, and boredom, within no time Devayani shares a strong bond of friendship with Rani. Rani’s entry in Devayani’s life brings in Ashok Chinappa too, who is Rajur’s new DSP. After a few meetings with Ashok, surprisingly Devayani finds that she has fallen in love with Ashok. Ashok too falls in love with her, despite the fact that he is much older, and married. Deyavani can neither endorse her love nor acknowledge it openly.
The inner demands, and social decorum stand at loggerheads, and generate conflicts, and the resultant challenges tear her apart. This is a novel which is sympathetic, spells nature of love, and yet is rooted to the ground.

*Ships That Pass* (2012) is a subtle exploration of love, and marriage within a murder-mystery. This novel tells about a fourteen year old marriage, leading to anger, and tragedy, and alongside the start of a parallel romance. Tara, and Shaan are near strangers to each other after fourteen years of being married. Tara’s sister Radhika feels disappointed by their lukewarm reaction, and is in a hurry to get married, because she feels bored, and has nothing to do in life, and marriage, as the society often points out seems like a perfect solution. Radhika ties a knot to settle into matrimony with Ghan Shyam. There is also Ram Mohan, the doctor, who shares a very sweet relationship with Tara. Tragedy strikes. Tara dies in mysterious circumstances, and Shaan is arrested for murder. In the aftermath, Radhika realizes that, when life may seldom turn out as expected the only hope lies in finding the courage to take one’s chances. In this latest novel, Shashi Deshpande explores human relationships in the backdrop of crime setting.

The researcher intends to analyse Shashi Deshpande’s protagonists under Psychoanalysis Theory. For this purpose it is necessary to have some discussion on Psychoanalysis Theory. Psychoanalysis Theory states that the mind is divided into two parts. The conscious part of which an individual is aware, and the unconscious part of which an individual is not aware. The unconscious mind has more influence than the conscious mind on ones personality, and behaviour. The unconscious is so large, and because we are only aware of the very small conscious at any given time, this theory is likened to an iceberg, where the vast majority is buried beneath the water’s surface. The water would represent everything that we are not aware of,
have not experienced, and that has not been integrated into our personalities, referred to as nonconscious. Further Psychoanalysis is the technique of researching, and discovering the ways of the mind, and the thought processes. It maintains a specific set of ideas with regard to human behaviour. It is a form of therapy for the treatment of various emotional, and psychological disturbances. Further this school of thought emphasized the influence of the unconscious mind on the behaviour of a person. It also refers to a person’s personality organization, and personality development.

The founder of psychoanalysis theory is Sigmund Freud. He is called as the Father of the Psychoanalysis Theory. He has written many books in Psychology, especially in Psychoanalysis. Some of his works include Studies on Hysteri (1895), Introduction to Psychoanalysis (1917), The Ego and the Id (1923), and An Outline of Psycho-Analysis (1940). This psychoanalysis theory came to full prominence in the last part of the twentieth century after the 1960s, long after Freud's death in 1939.

According to Freud, human beings are born with their Id. The Id is an important part of personality because as newborns, it allows one to get the basic needs met. Freud believed that the Id is based on an individual’s pleasure principle. In other words, the Id wants whatever feels good at the time, with no consideration for the reality of the situation. Within the next three years, as the child interacts more, and more with the world, the second part of the personality begins to develop. Freud called this part the Ego. The Ego is based on the reality principle. The Ego understands that other people have needs, and desires, and that sometimes being impulsive or selfish can hurt us in the long run. It is the Ego's job to meet the needs of the Id, while taking into consideration the reality of the situation. By the age of five, the Superego develops. The Superego is the moral part of an individual, and
develops due to the moral, and ethical restraints placed by the caregivers. Many equate the Superego with the conscience as it dictates ones belief of right, and wrong.

Fodor, and Gaynor, defines Psychoanalysis theory in *Freud: Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* as, “the whole of psychoanalysis theory is in fact built up on the perception of the resistance exerted by the patient when we try to make him conscious of his unconscious” (148). Liebert, and Spiegler defines Psychoanalytic Theory in *Personality: Strategies and Issues*, as, “Psychoanalytic personality theory emphasizes the roles of intrapsychic events (processes occurring in the mind), unconscious drives, and early childhood development” (43). Friedman, and Schustack defines psychoanalysis theory in *Personality: Classic Theories and Modern Research* as, “Childhood experiences, repressed erotic feelings, and unconscious conflicts can affect adult behaviour” (62).

Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytical tool chosen for study are defense mechanism, and Intrapersonal psychotherapy. From the onset the Ego has to try to fulfil its task of acting as an intermediary between the Id, and the external world in the service of the pleasure principle, to protect the Id from the dangers of the external world. In this battle, the Ego makes use of various methods of fulfilling its task, i.e., to put it in general terms, of avoiding danger, anxiety, and displeasure. These methods are called as defense mechanisms.

Defense mechanisms are thought to safeguard the mind against feelings, and thoughts that are too difficult for the conscious mind to cope with. In some instances, defense mechanisms keep inappropriate or unwanted thoughts, and impulses from entering the conscious mind. All defense mechanisms are responses to anxiety, and how the consciousness, and subconscious handle the stress of a social situation.
The psychologist Allen defines defense mechanism in *Personality Theories* as “a mental maneuver that one consciously or unconsciously chooses to use to distort or falsify the truth of one’s experience in order to protect oneself from feeling painful emotions like shame, guilt, or anxiety” (67).

The different types of defense mechanisms are repression, reaction formation, denial, projection, displacement, sublimation, regression, acting out, and rationalization. Repression is pushing threatening thoughts back into the unconscious. Reaction Formation is process of pushing threatening impulses by overemphasizing the opposite in one’s thoughts, and actions. Denial is refusing to acknowledge anxiety provoking stimuli. Projection is a defense mechanism in which anxiety arousing impulses are externalized by placing them, or projecting them, onto others. Displacement is shifting the target of one’s unconscious fears or desires. Sublimation is transforming of dangerous urges into positive, socially acceptable motivations. Regression is a type of defense mechanism which emphasis a return to an earlier safer stage of our lives. Acting out involves acting with little or no insight or reflection, and in order to attract attention, and disrupt other people's cozy lives. Rationalization is logical explanations for behaviours that were actually driven by internal unconscious motives.

The other tool chosen for study is Sigmund Freud’s Intrapersonal Therapy. It is an innovative approach to resolve problems, and to facilitate personal growth. The philosophy of ‘healing from the inside out’ is pivotal to this approach. Instead of dealing with outside forces in life, the intention of this approach is to strengthen the ‘self’ of an individual. This approach teaches to use the ability, and to accept full responsibility for decision making in his/her life. Further this therapy helps an individual to discover, define, and develop an authentic identity.
When speaking about self-realization, Viktor Frankl in *Man’s Search for Meaning* says, “Once an individual’s search for meaning is successful, it not only renders him happy but also gives him the capability to cope with suffering” (9).

The New-Freudians are a group of psychologists who were influenced by Sigmund Freud. They are now called as Contemporary Freudians. Some of the Contemporary Freudians are Christopher Bollas, D.W. Winnicott, Adam Phillips, Heinz Hartmann, Kernberg, and Kohut. Psychoanalysis in India began in very early 1920. One among the Contemporary Freudian who made psychoanalysis popular in India was Sudhir Kakar. He was trained in psychoanalysis at the Sigmund Freud Institute in Frankfurt, Germany in 1971. Dr. Sudhir Kakar is a practising psychoanalyst, and novelist. He lives in Goa, India. The leading German weekly *Die Zeit* has profiled him as one of the twenty one thinkers for the twenty first century. His most recent award is the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, the country’s seventh highest civilian honour. Some of his works include *Inner World: A Psycho-Analytic Study of Childhood and Society in India*, *Conflict And Choice*, and *Identity And Adulthood*. His analyses of personages include that of Swami Vivekananda in *The Inner World* (1978), Mohandas Gandhi in *Intimate Relations* (1989), and Ramakrishna in *The Analyst and the Mystic* (1991).

All psychoanalytic approaches to literature begin with a full psychological theory of how, and why people behave as they do, a theory that has been developed by a psychologist, psychiatrist, psychoanalyst outside of the realm of literature, and they apply this psychological theory as a standard to interpret, and evaluate a literary work.
Following this when analysing Shashi Deshpande’s novels in chapter two, three, and four the Psychoanalysis Theory is utilized to interpret the concealed meaning within the novels, to understand the author’s intentions better, and to study the thought processes which lead to the actions of the protagonists.

The aim, and purpose of this thesis is to study **Empowerment of Women as Reflected in Select Novels of Shashi Deshpande.** Empowerment is a complex concept. It is difficult to define, and conceptualise in general. Women empowerment is even more complicated. It is multi dimensional. It refers to economic empowerment, socio-cultural empowerment, interpersonal empowerment, legal empowerment, sexual empowerment, political empowerment, academic empowerment, psychological empowerment, and so on. It is possible to see many dimensions of women empowerment in the novels of Shashi Deshpande.

The present study has been organized into five major chapters. The novels chosen for study are *The Dark Holds No Terrors, Roots and Shadows, That Long Silence, Small Remedies, A Matter of Time, The Binding Vine, Moving On, In the Country of Deceit,* and *Ships That Pass.* Each chapter examines a definite step in the process of empowerment of women.

Chapter two, **Transcending the Boundaries of Feminity,** explores the nature of the female world, and how Shashi Deshpande reconstructs the suppressed records of female experience. In order to gain equality, and to realize their human potential, women must transcend their distinctive femaleness. For this study *The Dark Holds No Terrors, Roots and Shadows,* and *That Long Silence* novels are selected. The way how the protagonists of these novels attempt to transcend their boundaries of feminity is brought out in this chapter.
Chapter three **Emerging Identity of Women** addresses the issues of women who can no longer endure the suppression, and objectified treatment of the patriarchal society. They are neither passive nor aggressive. Their search for freedom results in their emergence as a bold, and challenging woman of determination thereby developing a new identity. For this study the novels *Small Remedies*, *A Matter of Time*, and *The Binding Vine* are selected.

Chapter four **Manifestation of Empowered Women** deals with the concept that the women have to blame themselves for their own victimisation. Further, this chapter studies how the protagonists are engaged in a constructive process of consciousness raising. Their decision to have their own way gives a new confidence to them, and this confidence brings them emancipation. The novels selected for study in this chapter are *Moving On*, *In the Country of Deceit*, and *Ships That Pass*.

The last chapter **Conclusion** gives a summing up of all the chapters, and scope for future study. Further this chapter establishes how women characters are empowered in Shashi Despande’s novels. The protagonists of Shashi Despande voice the women’s identity, freedom, and challenges, psychological complexities, and optimistic view in their crisis. This concluding chapter also discusses how patriarchal society confines woman to the kitchen withholding her talents by imposing rigid restraints on her, and how Shashi Deshpande tries to address women with her bold ideas through her novels.