ABSTRACT

The postcolonial literature has become hot commodity these days. It points out various themes related to human nature. The postcolonial literature shares some significant concerns and characteristics. In Indian context, postcolonial literature includes novels, poetry and drama which were written both during and after the British Raj or ‘Reign,’ which came to a formal conclusion with Indian Independence. In a sense, the colonizers and colonized appear the basic components of postcolonial literature. Many writers have contributed to the growth of postcolonial literature. The present study aims at exploring female marginalization reflected in the novels of Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapur, Arundhati Roy, Rama Mehta and Bharati Mukharjee. The works of these novelists invite the issue of female marginalization. The process of female marginalization begins as women are inter-webbed with each other on the basis of being “Female” where all their grief, sufferings and anguish get clubbed to accentuate it to the world. The present study deals with the selected novels i.e Rama Mehta’s Inside the Haveli, Manju Kapur’s Difficult Daughters, Arundhati Roy’s The God of Small Things, Bharati Mukharjee’s Wife and Shashi Dehpande’s The Binding Vine. An attempt is made to find out various kinds of marginalization that women are still facing in Indian society. Introduction includes purpose of the study, review of literature, hypothesis, methodology, scope and limitations and significance of the study.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters.

**The first chapter** deals with theoretical framework of marginalization that occurs in each person’s life every now and then. It encompasses basic types of marginalization that is spatial marginalization and sociological marginalization. The chapter construes the theory of marginalization, a sociological term defined by different sociologists. Basically, the term marginalization occupies a broad space in every field of life, so it appears tough to bind in words. The theory of marginalization emerges from the social stratification that elaborates the division of unequal population in the form of upper class and lower class or social layers depending on financial condition, wealth, gender, ethnicity, power, status, age or some other characteristics. Consequently, there is an unequal sharing of rights, privileges, duties and responsibilities. Even social values and hardships also occupy inequality. Moreover, social power and influences are unequal among the members of society. This stratification gives birth
to marginalization. Next, marginalization emerges from the Class, and Caste hierarchy that interlinks with each other, but it is very hard to separate them. Both occupy wide range of issues that deal with signal of status, level of equality and inequality, cultural and structural interaction. The theory deals with poverty culture which is a social problem that converts into the common features of all financially weak people in every society. The reactions, similarities, and differences in problems are common in poor people. These features develop into specific culture of society that is shared, learned and responded into socially transmitted behavior of social groups. However, cultural marginalization also becomes the imperative part of theory of marginalization. Along with the theory, this chapter focuses the factors responsible for the female marginalization in the society. These factors consist of patriarchy, gender-biased perception and subordinate status, quest for identity, sexual assault, loneliness and poverty. These factors sideline female in every walk of life by suppressing her life-skills. These factors also help to probe into the marginalization of various characters depicted in the selected novels.

The second chapter focuses Inside the Haveli by Rama Mehta. The chapter begins with the brief summary of novel and biographical sketches of the novelist. The novel brings out the obsession of feudal system of Indian culture where women face victimization in the name of customs and traditions. The novel reveals the journey of central character Geeta, a modern girl hailing from Bombay enters haveli culture after her marriage with Ajay, a high profile professor. She feels unable to assimilate with feudal culture of haveli that execute the practice of ‘purdah’ only for women. Even she tries to confront the situation with academic zest. In her journey of understanding feudal life, she involves with the lives of other women who too sail on the same boat of victimization in male-dominated society. At the top of that, Geeta faces the patriarchal clutches in the form of feudal culture. She becomes the victim of gender-biased attitude and bears underestimation of being daughter-in-law of haveli highlighting the paradigm of subordinate status. The male-dominant austere system subordinates women at patriarchal and gender-biased level. The patriarchal forces of haveli culture form each act strategically, where Geeta unknowingly gets trapped. Her journey of life from cosmopolitan city like Bombay to Udaipur, a conservative city focuses the marginalization of women under the ornamental name of customs and traditions. Simultaneously, the chapter also depicts one of the servants in the haveli namely Lakshmi who too becomes the victim of marginalization. She faces gender-biased attitude of the society and lives the life with full of hardships. She suffers more as being
subordinate and belonging to poor class. The next victim of marginalization is the daughter of Lakshmi namely Sita. Sita gets marginalized on the basis of gender and poverty. The main servant in the haveli is Pari who too becomes the victim of poverty and suffers being subordinate woman. Major female characters in this novel are marginalized at patriarchal, gender-biased and poverty level.

The third chapter unfolds the marginalization of women in Difficult Daughters by Manju Kapur. The chapter begins with the brief summary of the novel and biographical sketches of the novelist. The central character of this novel is Virmati, who falls in love with a married professor namely Harish for the sake of intellectual hunger. But on the way to unite with him, she receives various hardships of life that drag her on the path of mental debacle. She maintains live-in-relationship with professor but gets mentally and physically tortured. Eventually, she marries him after undergoing various ordeals of life. These ordeals underline the factors responsible for her marginalization. The novel depicts an invisible anguish of women in domestic as well as academic field. At the top most, Virmati faces the marginalization due to gender-biased perception of society and her subordinate status which results in her loneliness. Virmati’s mother Kasturi too becomes the victim of patriarchy and subordination. Ganga, the first wife of professor also gets victimized in the web of marginalization at various levels. In the whole scenario, how women become the victims of society is illustrated powerfully in the novel. All the above depicted women get sidelined due to the patriarchal mindset and gender biased attitude of the people.

The forth chapter deals with The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy. The chapter begins with the brief summary of the novel and the biographical sketches of the novelist. The novel reveals the story of Ammu, a mother and her kids namely Estha and Rahel. The pathetic story runs in flashback manner that unfurls various layers of Ammu’s life. Ammu’s father, Papachi usually beats her and her mother, Mamachi. To avoid the shocks of mental torturing by Pappchi, Ammu thinks that marriage is only the way to escape her from the painful life. In order to escape from the patriarchal dominance of her father, Ammu marries with a man who later appears to be a drunkard. This quick decision of marriage drops her in another disaster of life, where her mental and physical situation starts deteriorating day by day. Eventually, she comes back to her father’s house, only the source of support. Being a divorcee, she gets no support and respect in
the house. Her affair with Velutha, a lower caste parvan, throws her in catastrophe of life and as a result, she dies alone in the hotel at the age of thirty-one only. The setting of the novel is Ayemen, where matriarchy appears dominant. Despite this, the novel throws light on marginalization of women in patriarchal and gender-biased society. At first, this chapter points out the mounting marginalization of Ammu at patriarchal and gender-biased level. Even she becomes victim in ‘matriarchal patriarchy’. Along with this, the chapter figures out Ammu’s mother, Mammachi who gets trapped in the clutches of patriarchy and suffers a lot being woman. Next, Rahel, the daughter of Ammu also faces double marginalization as a daughter of divorcée and a grand-daughter of Papachi. Margaret, the ex-wife of Chako also becomes the victim of social stratification. The present study focuses the various kinds of marginalization of women at various levels.

The fifth chapter deals with Bharati Mukharjee’s novel *Wife*. It reveals the story of young girl, Dimple Dasgupta, who dreams to be a wife of a prince who will bring her solace and happiness in life. As a result, she becomes crazy for cosmetics to make her more beautiful. As per her father’s anticipation, she marries Amit, an engineer, willing to migrate to USA. Dimple’s dream of happiness shatters as she enters the house of Amit. Her mindset weakens day by day which brings her close to the psychological disorder. She feels misfit in the present surroundings and faces self-marginalization that results into massive loneliness of life. This loneliness enhances, when the couple shifts to USA. The cross-cultural changes make her marginalized at communicative as well as other sides of her existence. She is unable to assimilate with American culture. Despite of living in America, she becomes the victim of patriarchy and remains in the clutches of typical Indian mindset of her husband. He does not allow her to enjoy liberal American culture, as a result, she feels marginalized at cultural level where she loses her confidence and spends more time in watching violent serials on TV set. This loneliness appears as the effect of her marginalization that creates mental disorder in her personality. She gets trapped in patriarchal and Indian culture in such a way that she even cannot cope with these situations. The negative attitude of Amit arouses disgust in her mind, and in her hysterical mood, she murders her husband. The personality of Dimple exemplifies the continuous occurrences of crisis because of her marginalization. The present chapter points out the special effects of marginalization on the life of Dimple.
The sixth chapter presents female marginalization reflected in the novel *The Binding Vine* by Shashi Deshpande. The present chapter includes brief summary of the novel and biographical sketches of the novelist. The novel is symbiosis of a number of women who relegate to each other by kinship. The protagonist of this novel is ‘Urmi’ who works as a professor and overcomes with grief of her daughter Anu’s untimely death. She lives in loneliness in the memory of her lovable daughter. When she meets other women accidently, she realizes that her grief appears much lesser than other suppressed women. The journey of her understanding makes her acquaint with marginalization of women at every walk of life which is the root cause of their distress. There is Meera, Urmi’s mother-in-law, Kalpana, a daughter of maid servant, Inni, her own mother and so as others who become the victim of marginalization due to patriarchal forces, gender-biased perception, subordinate status and sexual assault of these women. These factors do not give any chance to women to revive their lives. Realizing this truth, Urmi feels sympathetic to them. The present chapter brings out the marginalization of each woman depicted in the novel in ascending to descending order. In brief, Meera faces marginalization due to patriarchal forces in the form of her husband, and of gender-biased perception. This attitude does not appreciate her creativity of composing poems, but everyone tries to underestimate her work. She faces sexual assault by her husband. It shatters her dream of tenderness regarding love. The same kind of marginalization; reflects in the lives of other female characters in the novel also. Next girl is Kalpana who too faces life-taking marginalization and rest of other women such as Shakuntala, a maid and Kalpana’s mother, Yamini, a mother of Urmi, Akka, a step-mother-in-law of Urmi and Sulu, the sister of Shakuntala face the marginalization in their lives.

The seventh chapter concludes with major findings. The present study reveals the causes of subjugation and marginalization of women in Indian society. The women get marginalized at different levels in society. It is the fact of life that every recognized or non-recognized person faces marginalization some or other time in life. But regarding women, many factors play crucial role in subjugating her “self” and it brings her on the path of trauma. Many times, men are seen at the centre where as women are seen at the periphery. They look at women merely an object of ‘sexual being’. Men, now a days use ‘sex’ as a pervasive weapon to execute his supremacy over women. It is so because every where ‘sex’ is shown as a medium for recreation and not for procreation. It is the factual reality that gender is sociological, where as ‘sex’ is biological. Consequently, many women in the novels face sexual assault. In day to day life, we can witness
various heinous cases of sexual assault on women. To avoid this, there is a need of counseling to the people regarding sexual outlook. To some extent, it may help to stop sexual humiliation of women. Marginalization carries two basic effects on the personality of each human being. It has positive as well as negative effects. Traditionally, women accept the framework of the family with a blind faith and rarely show rebellious attitude. Any kind of marginalization invites the quest for self identity. This quest for identity is seen in the characters of Virmati, Urmila, and Geeta and in other characters also. This marginalization offers the tool of silence and protest to cope against male –supremacy. It becomes the strength of women to fight positively against different social forces such as patriarchy, gender-bias perception, and subordination. The negative effect of marginalization causes rebellious attitude among women who become violent in action. It gives birth to negative thinking that results into killing the conscience of a person. This negativity brings psychological disorder in the attitude of oppressed and drags her/him on the path of crime. Dimple’s continuous suppression of emotions drags her on the path of psychological disorder. Unknowingly, her feebleness converts into hysterical attack and as a result she murders her husband. It is so because of the mind-set and attitude of male-ideology, the women get marginalized at various levels. The ‘Indian mothering’ too plays vital role in shaping the traditional image of women as per desires of males. So, Indian mothering should play a vital role in minimizing the sense of gender discrimination. For wiping out the female marginalization, the women have to develop and maintain their solidarity at all levels. If we promote this kind of positive global view, definitely the percentage of female marginalization can be lessening.