CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The importance of women has been recognized in many literatures on various grounds. At the same time it has to be noted that the views in those literature are synonymous for years as they are from the heart and mind of men. The works of men do not present the true picture of women. The impartial views and the influence of tradition and culture paved the way to 'Feminism'. Thus the history of woman's oppression has been the origin to 'feminism'. From the time of creation, the world is half populated with women. But the half population is looked down upon by the other half, men. In general women are viewed as subordinates to men. They are the secondary in almost all the society. Though women are physically and mentally equipped to perform on par with men, they are deprived of the opportunity to give expression to their feelings, their thoughts, and their anguish. Despite of their own expression of feelings, the world literature has many pages filled with the women characters as the interesting themes in them. The secondary humanity plays the vital role in forming the basic unit of the society: a family. Women are believed to be the foundation of the lovable relationships in the family and society. They are the creators and even destroyers of various kingdoms. The unfortunate position of woman is felt in the later ages as they are unaware of their potentiality and their importance in the society. The feministic movements in the 19th century led to the understanding of the self realisation and self -identity. Feminism in literature has given the women perception along with the female experience interrogating the cultural prescriptions.

The perception and presentation of women in literature give only a partial view of female personality. The understanding of women’s full capacity seems to be incomplete. The concept of women is always beyond human comprehension. There are different dimensions in the views of the writers. There are different observations about women in literature. "A female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities": Aristotle." Neither was man created for the woman, but the woman for the man": The Bible. The Koran has also assigned a subordinate position to woman. "Woman is a mutilated man": Freud."The whole education of women ought to be relative to men; to please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honored by them": Rousseau. Pythagoras assigned secondary position in the numerical symbolism (Shashi Deshpande, Writing from the Margin and Other Essays, 2). Number One stands for God or manliness whereas Number Two
stands for femaleness and divisiveness. At this juncture one point has to be noted that these observations are made by various thinkers and philosophers. The only thing to be noted is that these statements are said by men.

India as a land of tradition too has the different views about women. The views on women have been so different that they range from the highest to the lowest level. In the past ages women has a place of honour. Kalidasa finds woman as the embodiment of divine beauty ‘ekastha saudarya didrksayeva’. ‘Women are deities of prosperity, by cherishing women, one cherishes the goddess of prosperity herself and by afflicting her, one is said to pain the goddess of prosperity’ (Anusasana Parva Mahabharata). ‘Where the women are held in reverence, there do the Gods reside” – an old Sanskrit adage. (Qtd. in Preeti Misra, Domestic Violence Against Women, 27) The concept of ‘ardhanarishwara’ describes God head as half female and half male. These are some examples which show that women have been given the highest place in Indian religious and philosophical thought. The birth of a girl child was considered something honorable.

But there is another one side where women are treated as submissive slaves. Women have been equaled to ‘sudras’ and they were kept in dependence and control. The degradation of women has been gradual from the period of Vedas to the 19th century. Till the advent of the Turks Indian women enjoyed great freedom and prestige. But because of social economic and political changes women were thrown to a position of insignificance and burdened with many unhappy unwanted restrictions.

The Vedic period women enjoyed equality as par with men. They were free to participate in sacrificial rites. They could fight wars, participate in philosophical discussions. Rama Chowdry visualizes two types of women in Vedic society. Brahmavadini, the ascetic type of woman who carried on the quest of truth, knowledge and spiritual pursuits for her ideal Sadyovadu, the domestic type of woman who dedicated herself to the welfare of the family and society. According to 'Sarvanukramanika' there were twenty brahmavadhanis and they composed the hymns of Rigveda. Men considered women as partners in managing the affairs during the Grihasta, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa ashram in life. Consequently women enjoyed a quality of life comparable to that of the men. (3) Upanishads present women who were Brahmavadinis such as Uma, Gargi, Gosha, Godha, Vishwavara, Apala, Lilavathi and Maitreyi and notable for their learning. The Kaushitaki Brahman (7,6) gives a reference to a renowned lady Pahyaswasti. (8)
A view of the cultural history of India shows that the subordination of women has not been entertained in that glorious past. Ramayana shows the two different aspects of woman in the character of Sita. After conquering Lanka, Sita faces the total audience in Ayodhya. Her identity is seen in her relation to her husband Rama. Sita is glorified as Mata Sita but she is a puppet in the hands of her husband. This gives the difference between the ideal concept of woman and her real state.

In the succeeding age in the literature of Brahmanas the degradation of women started. At that time much of the spiritual freedom of Hindu women was wrested from them. Manu, the principal law maker safeguarded the interests of the family and society at the expense of individual liberty. The laws of Manu had the most negative effects on women and till his laws were mainly quoted to imprison Indian women in the name of tradition. It was Manu who legally assigned a definite place to women in the society. He himself has stated that a mother should be reverenced a thousand times more than a father but in society he has placed women equal to Sudras, the lowest of all. His laws insist that a woman must never be independent. He permits child marriage even as early as the age of eight. There are some places where women are held high. Manu declares in his laws that ‘where women are honored there the gods are pleased’ (3.56) (Qtd. in Preeti Misra, *Domestic Violence Against Women*, 15). On the other hand his famous dictum “a woman must be her father’s shadow in childhood, her husband’s in her youth, her son’s in her old age (15)” finds the notable place in the Indian society and these laws left a permanent mark on the future of the status of Indian women.

The status of Indian women had been elevated at the time of Buddhism. For Buddhism gave women a chance to enter the world of religion, It recalled the happiness and freedom enjoyed by them in the Vedic period. It allowed women to be educated and they were free to be the missionaries even to remain unmarried and join the Buddhist order with the consent of their parents. They had the equal status with men. They had the right of divorce too. In the same manner Sikhism also opened doors to women in the religious path. The Sikhism brought forward the revolutionary change in the condition of women in the society also. The practice of Sati has been condemned. The Purdah was eradicated. Women started working with men. They had regained the high position in the new society.
The invasion of the Muslims in the 11th century was the major cause for the deterioration of the position of Indian women. The freedom was taken away from them and their life became insecure. They face several hardships. They were made slaves and forcibly let to the steady deterioration of the status of women till the 19th century. Polygamy and the Purdah were the two important social institutions of the Muslims conquerors in India. The practice of Sati, self-immolation of widows, was strictly followed at that time. Even widows preferred Sati to the widowhood. The Hindu society continued to the codes and principles of Manu. In the 18th century the women were viewed as inferior species. Woman have no personality of her own. She was denied independent personality. She had no dreams of her own. She had no separate status as a member of the family or the society. (37) Women were considered as not worthy even to get education. They were unfit to take part in any religious, social, political functions. Women were kept in subjection. They were in such a position that they could not realize the need to ask for freedom. They lost not only freedom but even the thought to be free. They had totally forgotten the idea of their independent personality.

As Pandita Ramabai gives the picture of woman of that time, she is forbidden to read sacred scriptures. She has no right to pronounce a single syllable out of them. To appeal to her ornaments, to adorn her person and by giving her dainty food together with an occasional bow which costs nothing are the highest honors to which the Hindu woman is entitled.

The position of women needed a fundamental change in the attitude of the society. There should be a new society with new ideologies to make women conscious of their dependent state. They should realize the real role they have to play in the society. Then only they could come out of the cocoon of the subjection. The British conquest paved a way to new ideologies and a new environment. It caused a new knowledge which found the faults in the form of the society. It brought the new ideals from the West.

The late 19th century is the period when women are thrust at the forefront of political scenario in worldwide. The democratic ideals never pervade the women's unfair treatment. In industries women were not paid equal to men as well they were not allowed to vote. The women movements gathered momentum and formed a collective movement for equal rights in the year 1906-1914. Finally the women were given suffrage by 1928. The women movement became serious after the Second World War. In the West, thus the industrial revolution brought women
out of their homes and influenced to form the movement and concept ‘feminism’. The new ideology originated from the demand for equal rights in the society. It concerned with the marginalization of women. According to the historian Linda Gordon, feminism is: “an analysis of women’s subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change it” (Qtd. In Y.S. Sunita Reddy, *A Feminist Perspective on the Novels of Shashi Deshpande*, 12). The ideology ‘The search for identity’ is the basic concept of ‘feminism’. The term ‘Feminism’ was first used in 1872 by Alexandre Dumas, a French dramatist. He used the term in his pamphlet “L’Homme- femmo’ to designate the then emerging movement for women’s rights. Feminism became the stimulating power in the western society in the 19th century.

Till then the state of women was in the same position in India as it was in the whole world. At the beginning of the 19th century, there emerged a movement demanding equal rights for women on the political ground. It gradually spread across the world. They asked for equal rights in politics, society, economy, and education. In the later part of the 20th century this movement started shaking the world. It influenced many to think in a new dimension over the age old beliefs. The self-assertion and self-identity are the new ideas given by Feminist movement.

The western women have achieved their rights after the rigorous movements. But in India those rights for women have been given willingly by Indian leaders. In India the feminist movements are not serious as women are bestowed with the rights they want. The first row of the movement has been led by the social reformers, who gave their voice against the discrimination in the name of caste and gender. There was also a new ideology from the west, liberty and equality. The social reformers tried to harmonize both the tradition and the modern ideas. They worked hard to eradicate the discriminations against women. They showed immense concern over the women’s issues such as Sati, child marriage, female infanticide, widowhood, purdah, polygamy, devadasi, and education.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy should be mentioned as the foremost. He stopped the custom of sati referring to the various Sanskrit texts to prove that Sati was not prescribed by any religious text. There were many social reformers who worked on the evils of the society with the support of tradition. They mentioned Sanskrit texts even for widow remarriage. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar campaigned widow remarriage referring the Sanskrit texts. Behramji M.Malabari fought against the suffering of child widows and was responsible for the raise of the age of consent. Durgaram
Mehtaji. D.K. Karve worked for women’s education. Khwaja Altaf Husain Hali and Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah contributed to the field of women’s education. Gopal Ganesh Agarkar advocated the rights of women on the ground of equality. Pandit Ramabai challenged the tradition which forbade the freedom of women. The efforts of such reformers won the fruitful results in the British rule. The legislations banned Sati (1829), permitting widow remarriage (1856) and determining age of consent (1891) were passed. The political scene also welcomed women to share their participation. Women started participating in the freedom struggle. Gandhi was the significant influence which made women to come out of their homes. He turned traditional symbols and ideals into sources of inspiration and energy for women.

After independence the new Indian constitution also has granted equal rights to women as par with men. The rights for which the women fought in the West have been given to Indian women readily. Hence, as it is said earlier in India, the women movement is mild and tempered. But this is only the half of the picture. Men and women are equal in theory and law but in practical life women were subjected to all sorts of discrimination. The Indian society is with more complexities based on religion caste and classes. the state of women in such a society is totally oppressed and suppressed.

Women’s active participation for the nation’s independence heralded a new era not only for the nation but for their own state also. They realized their real role in the society and they considered independence was needed for themselves too. They took noticed that they were in need of freedom and identity. The ideology ‘search for identity’ came from the West in the 19th century. The new ideology evoked women to ask for liberty and equality. They tried to harmonize the age old tradition and the new ideologies. Though they found some conflict in them to manage both tradition and modernity, the search for identity was there in their mind stimulating them.

Feminism has the long political history, as has been developed as a substantial force, in America and Britain throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The women’s rights and women’s movements were very crucial in maintaining the phase which has the emphasis on social, political and economical reforms. Feminism in literature can be traced back in the 18th century in the works of William Blackstone and John Stuart Mill with their theories in favour of equal rights to women. In the United States, Mary Wollstonecraft’s A Vindication for Rights of Women published in 1792 stirred the conscience and the consciousness of the time. The
feminist movement had been the marginalised one till 1950s. In 1960s the feminism has reached a new height concentrating on the psychological, linguistic and social theories about the gender construction and difference. The first wave feminism includes the two important names; Virginia Woolf and Simon de Beauvoir. Virginia Woolf – in Mary Eagleton’s phrase, 'the founding mother of the contemporary debate'- who ‘announces’ many of the issues later feminist critics were to focus on and who herself becomes the terrain over which some debates have struggled. With Simon de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex (1949)* ends the first wave.

Virginia Woolf’s two texts *A Room of One’s Own (1929)* and *Three Guineas (1938)* are her major contribution to the feminist theory. As the first wave feminist Woolf concerns with women’s material disadvantages compared to man. *A Room of One’s Own* could be taken as 'the forceful modern tract on feminism'. The later feminists frame the ideologies from the works of Woolf, though she never called herself as 'feminist'. It concerns with the women’s literary production and argues that women’s writing should explore female experience in its own right and ‘not form a comparative assessment of women’s experience in relation to men’s’. This confirms the early statement and exploration of a distinctive tradition of women’s writing. *Three Guineas* suggests more feminist ideas, such as demanding mother’s allowances, divorce law reform and proposals to women’s colleges and women’s newspapers.

Woolf’s contribution to feminism is that gender identity is socially constructed and can be challenged and transformed. She continually examined the problems faced by the women writers. She rejected the feminine consciousness and wanting her femininity to be unconscious so that she might ‘escape from the confrontation with femaleness or maleness.’ She suggests the Bloomsbury sexual ethic of ‘androgyny’ and hoped to achieve a balance between a ‘male’ self–realization and female self-annihilation. The same has been developed by the later feminists like Elaine Showalter and Kristeva into psychological theories.

Feminism is by no means a monolithic term. If one seeks a common strand in a number of its varieties, it is the critique of the patriarchal modes of thinking which subordinate women to men in familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal and artistic domains. This patriarchal ideology teaches women to internalize these concepts in the process of their socialization. It brings into focus the concepts of gender which are man-made. As Simone de Beauvoir observes, "One is
not born, but rather becomes, a woman. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature...which is described as feminine" (*The Second Sex*, 267). This androcentric ideology pervades through those writings which have been considered great literature and focus on male protagonists providing women secondary roles.

Feminism broadly aims at refuting these masculinist approaches to women approaches to women. It aims at bringing to fore the feminine subject matters in a distinctive feminine mode of experience. There seems to be something what we might call a woman's point of view, an outlook sufficiently distinct to be recognizable through the centuries. Raman Seldon lists as many as five main foci involved in most discussions of sexual difference. They are: biology, experience, discourse, the unconscious and the social and economic conditions. Cheri Register opines that a feminist writing needs to fulfill one or more of the following: "Serve as forum for women; help to achieve cultural androgyny, provide role models; promote sisterhood; and augment consciousness rising" (Qtd. in Raman Seldon, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, 121)

The movement became a powerful one as it had the pioneers like Simone de Beauvoir, who sought to shatter ‘the myth of femininity’ in her book *The Second Sex*. The book was first published in French in the year 1949. It was made more accessible to the world when it was translated into English. In her own words:

All agree in recognizing the fact that female exists in the human species; today as always they make up about one half of the humanity. And yet we are told that femininity is in danger; we are exhorted to be women remain women become women. It would appear, then, that every female human being is not necessarily a woman; to be so considered she must share in that mysterious and threatened reality known as femininity. Is this attributing something secreted by the ovaries? Or is it a platonic essence, a product of the philosophic imagination. (*The Second Sex*, 2)

Simone de Beauvoir clearly expresses her ideas with the references in various disciplines such as psychology, biology and history. She deals with all the women’s issues so long untouched. The writings of Simone de Beauvoir made the base for the revolution. Another one major work sparked off the liberation movement is *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) by Betty Friedan. There starts the second wave of feminism. The second wave has the five main foci; biology, experience, discourse, the unconscious and social and economical conditions. Biology is dealt as the
fundamental and that play down socialization which keeps women ‘in their place’. Experience suggests the female life experiences which are not as men. Women’s experience includes emotional and perceptual life. Women do not see things same ways as men. Moreover they have different ideas and feelings about what is important or not important. That decides the differences in the women’s writing. The discourse deals with the man-made language which is not apt for expressing the female experiences. Women are fundamentally oppressed by the male dominated language. Female socio linguistics suggests that women writers should contest the men’s control of language if they want to be equal to men.

The fourth focus is on the unconscious as treated by Lacan and Kristeva. To them, the female sexuality is revolutionary, subversive, heterogeneous, and ‘open’. The first wave suggests the sociological conditions and that have been continued in the second wave. Marxist feminist includes the economic condition of women which would change the balance between the sexes.

Friedan’s book was followed by Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* in 1969. Millett is another important feminist of the 19th century. She argues that women are in the demeaning position in the patriarchal society. After the two studies, she presents the graphical picture of the insecurity to women in the society since there was a preference to male-child. She rightly observed the society would face the problem of female feticide through prenatal sex determination tests. She writes the phenomenon of parents’ prenatal preferences for male issues is too common to require such elaboration. In the light of the imminent possibility of parents actually in choosing the sex of their child, such a tendency is becoming the cause of some concern in scientific circles.

The contemporary feminists can be ranked as liberal, socialist and radical. They share some common concepts. They argue that the task of explaining is reserved by the men folk but the explanations never included the feminine perspective. Knowledge about women has been the product of the male mind. This role of patriarchal triumph over the feminine perception has been piloted the women writers to say about their own experience ad feeling. Traditional views have never allowed sharing power with men. When the power in the society depends on the physical power, woman has to be satisfied with the home and hearth. But in modern society the intellect is more counted than the physical force. Hence women are in a position to share the power as par with men. Nevertheless the traditional views have their authority over the society. Modern women are in the way to achieve their equal position in society. But the men folk still have the
past views of negligence about women. Women writers in theology and fiction have given considerable respect to the tradition. They have been restricted in the criticism of masculine superiority in their sphere.

Feminist psychologists oppose Freud's theories. They are particularly critical of his belief that women are relatively passively disposed as far as psychological norms are concerned. Traditional Freud's theory has been termed as conservative and declared totally incompatible with female desire for change. In spite of the differences the feminist psychologists use the theories freely. Nancy Chodorow has accepted many Freudian assumptions for her character development. It is noted in her famous work *Queen of Stones* especially in the character Dora.

The feminists of today points out that there are many areas in the society where women can work equal to men. The economical development helps with new disciplines to work where women can prove their efficiency. Demand for women's having control over their fertility is also gaining momentum. The expectation for assigning a new role to women in society without considering their biological capacity is emphasised.

Recent thinkers like W.S.Byatt maintain that continuous stay of mother with the child has made damaging effect on both of them. Byatt challenges the orthodox concept of motherhood and the belief of women's place is hearth. After interviewing many house wives, she found non-entities. She found the denial of identity in them. Hence she rejects the concept of Freud that women can be glorified only in her femininity. She claims the necessity of analysing autonomy, self-fulfillment, self- realisation and independence for women. She does not discard the institution of marriage unlike the militant feminists of a later period.

Germaine Greer, belonging to the same group of militant feminists, comes out with the idea that marriage must be abolished since “if women are to affect a significant amelioration in their condition it seems obvious that they must refuse to marry” (Qtd. in Miti Pandey, *Feminism in British and Indian English Fiction*, 7). The idea of discouraging marriages and nuclear family is expressed in *The Female Eunuch* (1970). During 1970s a number of radical feminists advocated equality. Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) , Eva Fige's *Patriarchal Attitudes* (1970), Mitchell's Women's *Estate* (1971) and Ann Oakley's *Sex Gender and Society* (1972) *The Sociology of Housework* (1974) and *Housewife* (1976) are some of them.
There are many shades of feminism emerged now a days. They have to solve the problem - obtaining the equal social status for women. These feminists focus on the women as community, sexual politics, and political campaign. These feminists are different from the 'academic feminism' which involves the discussion of individualistic and elitist attitudes. Cultural feminists view a change of women's status with an alternative culture. The main concern of this stream of feminism is to concentrate on the therapy movement, cults and matriarchy, woman-bonding, meditation, goddess worship and the study of women in literature and art. The Woman Peace movement initiated by Greenham Common Peace Camp exemplifies cultural feminism. Liberal feminists argue for equal pay and equal job opportunities for both men and women. In general they oppose the trend of positive discrimination. They maintain that equality between men and women as human beings can be achieved without changing the existing social structure. Another major contribution to the contemporary women's movement has been made by lesbian feminists, who are identified as lesbians. They have produced the concept of 'woman identification'. Political lesbians maintain that women must primarily withdraw from the privileges imposed by men. There should be no commitment to men. No access should be given to the economy of male power and privilege.

Psychological feminists reinterpreted and appropriated the assumptions of Freud and Jacques Lacan. The approaches of psychoanalytic feminists differ to a great extent. They study on the construction of femininity and masculinity, mother-daughter relationship in the pre-oedipal stage, female sexuality and patriarchal relations. French feminists have been deeply influenced by Lacan’s reworking of Freud. Lacan restates Freud’s theory in the language of Saussure. Essentially, unconscious processes are identifies with the unstable ‘signifier’ and ‘signified’. The signifier, the phallus, holds out the promise of full presence and power. It is unobtainable and also threatens both sexes with the ‘castration complex’. Lacan calls this signifier as Name-of-the-Father. The child arrives at a sense of identity by entering the ‘symbolic’ order of language, which is made up of relations of similarity and difference. Radical and socialist feminists criticise psychoanalytic feminism because it does not emphasis on the economic base of the society.

Socialist feminism is another important branch of feminism. The concern of this movement is to avail the combination of ‘socialist' analysis of society with a 'feminist' one. Socialist feminists study the status of domestic labour. They define the women's position in the family, class, and the labour force. It also deals with the question of equal pay. These feminists are more practical because they work in mixed groups, join men in Trade Union work as well as city and
parliamentary politics. They argue that the private property and class divided society are the root cause for the subordinate position of women. They fight against the capitalism and patriarchy simultaneously.

Radical feminists discuss women's oppressed position in the family and work place. They fight back the gender-role stereotyping. They analyse the political significance of lesbianism, they present critiques of male violence and power such as rape, battery, pornography etc. It has promoted many service groups and political campaigns such as Women's Refuges, Rape Crisis Centers, Incest survivor groups, Lesbian Help-lines, Reclaim the Night Marches, WAVA W Groups (Violence Against Women). The radical feminists contributed new vocabulary like 'consciousness raising', male chauvinism, sexist (to prejudice role by gender), sex object (woman a pleasure thing for man) and full humanity.

Thus though there are some ideological differences the feminist movements aim at liberation of women from male domination and at promotion of their rights. They demand for a humanist attitude towards women. Feminists may use different vocabularies and concepts but their objective is always the same. Angela Weir and Elizabeth Wilson observe the liberation of women as an umbrella movement.

Kristeva’s concept “abjection” names the horror of being unable to distinguish between the ‘me’ and ‘not-me’. The ‘abject; is what the subject seeks to expel in order to achieve an independent identity. ‘Woman’ is not simply marginalized to a position outside ‘social-sexual norms’ rather she is expelled and threatens from what is simultaneously an outer and inner realm. Kristeva does not identify ‘feminine’ with biological woman and ‘masculine’ with biological man. She does not treat oppression of women as different in principle from that of other marginalised or exploited groups. As the initial feminism was part of a larger and more general theory subversion and dissent.

As far as feminism and literature are concerned, we find that the feminists of today are not satisfied with the question of stereotyped presentation of women by male writers. This dissatisfaction led to the origin of feminist literature. This has been followed by an independent study of women's writing. Elaine Showalter uses the term 'gynocritics' for this. The gynocritics
aim at establishing female literary tradition because feminists complain that they have been 'silenced' by their male counterparts. Literature dealing with female experiences has been thrown in the background. Women's journals and letters have been conspicuously ignored.

The women’s liberation movement was much supported by the writings of some feminist novelists. Sylvia Plath’s *Bell Jar* depicts the young innocent and oppressed heroine Esther, who comes vengeful later. Sylvia Plath uses ‘the exquisitely hard crafted mat’ as a symbol to explain the oppressed state of women. The exquisitely hard crafted mat was used as a piece of art for decoration and at the same time it is used to be soiled under the feet.

There are other feminist novelists whose contribution helped to get notice of the unuttered words of the female hearts. Margaret Drabble, Doris Lessing, Mrs. Gaskell, Dorothy Richardson, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Iris Murdoch, Murilyn French and Margret Atwood have been the great feminist novelists. They were followed by many spinster writers like Jane Austen, Emily Bronte, Stevie smith, Charlotte Mew, Mahenne Moor and Elizabeth Smith. These women writers express themselves from the core of the heart. Now they had the freedom to express their thoughts and emotions and explore the regions of experience.

Gynocritics aim at theorising women's literary production. It is being emphasized that women have a way of writing which is totally different from that of men. They have used a characteristically different language. Virginia Woolf emphasised the problem of women writer to use the male sentences of the 19th century because mind of women is different from that of man. As a consequence the women writer moved to use a new one. She opined that the change in literature would open new possibilities for women. She felt that there is difference between male and female feelings, experience as well as expressions. She searched for 'feminine identity' and feminine style' in literature. Doris Lessing like many other women writers also made such experiment with language in her writings. Most of the feminist literature owes much to great writers like Henry James, T.S.Eliot, and William Wordsworth.

Feminist literary criticism is the result of the feminist movement of the sixties. Feminist critics criticise the stereotyped image of woman as ‘a temptress and linguistic misogyny’. The feminist critics brought the neglected books of yesterday. To Mary Elman criticism should be asexual. She defines the often confused terms 'feminist', ‘feminine' and 'femaleness' clearly. Feminist is described as a political situation, femaleness as a matter of biology and feminine is a set
of culturally defined characteristics. Feminism has its history and various views in different countries. The common phenomenon of feminism is the recognition of the claim for equal rights with men. Apart from this common feature feminism has developed different shades in different societies.

The problems of women in India are different from that of western women. All depends on the social, cultural and political factors.

Recent French feminists pointed out the crucial stage in the female child’s acquisition of language. As said by Lacan the child must move from the imagery order to symbolic order. “During the intervening period it experiences with the mother. Later on as it advances to symbolic order, it must accept the law of the father. This is accepted differently” (Miti Pandey, Feminism in British and Indian English Fiction, 15). To their destruction the biological constitution of women has been used. American writers have different opinion on the identity of woman and the process of woman’s writing.

Women generally write something which is fluid. Women writers use their texts as a part of continuous process. In the process they involve their own self-definition with their characters. Whatever this element establishes, their special identity is difficult to establish. (16)

Elaine Showalter sees specific characteristics of women’s writings that arise out of the social conditions and the nature of experiences. According to her woman is a ‘muted group’ but the boundaries of its culture overlaps with that of the dominant (male) group. There are common experiences between two groups. They are considered as no man’s land and that stands for the aspects entirely and exclusively of female experience. Showalter believes that the development of a vocabulary for the body to describe female sexual behavior would present an alternative to the misogynistic male sexual language. The social construction through gender discrimination is the way to control the female sexuality and also to establish the male superiority. Men has created two different images to strengthen their power; ‘the chaste mother’ and ‘the whore figure’ are permanently fixed in the cultural representation of women all over the world as the part of a male culture. It is only man, not a woman who determines the position of woman and the meaning associated in the culture. Male culture thus is based on the suppression of the women by men.
The men have the ideology of making women as their subordinates based on the biological differences. The men all over the world have the idea of “superiority of man over woman”. The biological oppression by the men is based on the concept of reproducing and rearing the children as these are done by women. The rearing of children has been handed over totally to the women as their duty. Patriarchy builds the ideology of the sex-gender system on the basis of an opposition between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’. It has condensed women to silence with the encoding of certain ideologies through language. The differentiating principle is used to create a system of beliefs. Foucault says that “these processes of distinction, opposition and exclusion have at various times in our history defined our conception of sexuality” (Qtd. in Paulina Palmer, Contemporary Women’s Fiction, 79). The patriarchal culture is the dominating power group is determining the share of women in the society through the well-defined rules. It represents women in such a way that woman sees herself and makes her choices not in accordance with her true nature but as man defines her. It has produced two different classes of individuals whose clothes, appearance, occupation and interests are totally different from each other. (Simone deB eauvoir, The Second sex, 14) The social construction of gender is thus based on a system of beliefs. The set of beliefs has made the system of practices which instruct every aspect of the daily life—clothes, appearance, words we use etc. Thus according to the feminists the language is the significant factor in imposing silence on women. Language being phallocentric, when the child acquires an identity with in the ‘Symbolic order’ (law of the father) or the patriarchal order the male identity is automatically constructed in a positive term whereas the female identity is received in a negative term as the ‘other’ as understanding the lack of phallus and so negatively differentiated. The girl child lacks the subjectivity as there is difference in the anatomy and the girl child cannot internalize the ‘Symbolic order’ as she cannot identify with her father. ‘The laws of the father’ is imposed from the outside when the girl is confined to the margins. The language is not fully helpful to reveal the feelings of the women as the language is the tool of the male culture. Thus Lacan describes the phallus as a metaphor for the father’s intervention which symbolises the law that is the base of social order and this in consequence designs and assigns the roles to the man and the woman. He further explained the term phallus is not what men have and what women lack but what men ‘believe’ to have and what women are considered to lack. This concept leads to the question of social construction and thus interested the postmodern feminists to challenge the traditional representation of ‘women’.
The literature is used as a discourse to re-write and transmit male ideology and also to create and mould the men’s as well as women’s sense of the world. The descriptive nature of the narrative serves to bring about social order and psychological vigour, which shape the men and women as social beings. To quote Helene Cixous:

A Feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic, as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of masculine investments; there’s no other way. There’s no room for her if she’s not a he. If she’s a her-she. It’s in order to smash everything, to shatter the frame work of institutions, to blow up the law, to break the “truth”. (Qtd. in Paulina Palmer, *Contemporary Women’s Fiction*, 99)

The writing of women has been the replica of the social and cultural outcome of what is taught for the ages. Men have created the creature called woman through the every sphere of life-history, philosophy, religion, literature, law, science etc. Gilbert and Gubar point out in the book, *The Mad Woman in the Attic*:

The chief creature man has generated is woman….. from Eve, Minerva, Sophia and Galatea onward…. Patriarchal mythology defines women as created by, from and for men, the children of male brains, ribs, and ingenuity. (12)

Cixous makes it clear that the women have to write their body, their feelings. She uses the metaphor milk (white ink) and insists the women’s writing, the hidden force that produces the other woman; the source for the other. The relation to the “mother” is one of the intense pleasure and violence that cannot be curbed as it is the relation to her childhood to the state where she mothers herself. According to Cixous, writing is an important factor of resistance and liberation that will enable women to mark their escape by producing texts that challenge the law-of-the father as it is the expression of the words-of-mother. The relationship between daughter and mother has to be revived to change the symbolic codes that have been created and maintained by the patriarchal society.

The language of men is the language that controls the women all the ages. In her analysis of femininity, Irigaray stresses that by severing the mother and daughter relationship the patriarchal society has imposed complete silence on women. To break the silence the women has to change the symbolic codes through language. She further says that it cannot be based on phallocentrism as it
cannot reveal the body of woman–feminine language. Irigaray suggests an active rewriting, from women’s point of view, “of the female body, and of the possibilities of the female body as a site for the production of knowledge” (172).

Writing becomes a way of giving voice to the repressed female sexuality and the female libido. By writing herself, woman as an individual invents a new kind of writing that gives access to her real strength and discovers her sexuality rooted in the body – its pleasures and its desires. Women find ways to write about their pleasures (jouissance) but it is to transform the existing structure, the structure of the language that already exists. Cixous’s notion of ‘écriture feminine’ means ‘repudiating the masculine self, and acceptance or incorporation of the ‘other’ in such ways that will necessarily query the patriarchal ideology and demonstration of the feminine thereby creating a new order’. To Cixous the real purpose of writing is this revolution. She gives her view thus:

By writing herself, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her… write yourself. Your body must be heard only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth… that will change the rules of the old game. (Qtd. in Paulina Palmer, Contemporary Women’s Fiction, 107)

Women writers in their new writing imagine a new Eve, to redefine and liberate her as she ‘symbolically leaves the oppressed and enclosed garden of the patriarchal language’. When the women started writing they understand that even the literary canons are androcentric, and it is difficult to use the male language in an androcentric literary canon to express the feeling of women, the unknown territory of men. The women writers sensed an urgent need to express the new experiences of women in their own terms not in the constructed male point of view. They had to find the alternative ways to tell their stories and to reconnect themselves with other women. They had to rewrite the representation of male culture and also create a counter-canon to articulate their experiences.

Women writers find the literary genre novel as a tool in reinventing narratives to match up their desires and purposes. The feminists use novel to form a new history, rebuild woman’s life, and also to disturb the symbolic order with new symbols. The female experiences have to be heard from the silence, to be looked for in the absences, to be listened from the unspoken and to be observed from the encoded.
There we will find the true knowledge of women. And in breaking those silences, naming ourselves, uncovering the hidden, making ourselves present, we begin to define a reality which affirms our being. (102)

Men do not know the female territory whereas women know that of both and the feeling and thinking of the women gained currency. The critics analyses the difference between the languages of men and women. Women are less fluent and more hesitant. Generally their sentences are left unfinished. They often use tag questions instead of interruption and silence. They are more cooperative than competitive. Women’s writing expresses the desire of cooperation, communication, sharing, interaction and harmony. There is no possibility to interact in the writings of a male writer, which is written with snapping finality. Thus the experiments with the language show the possibility of woman writers holding a unique place.

The issue of empowerment, which is main concern for feminism, is conceptually interconnected with concepts of identity and freedom. The possibility of having a stable identity and freedom should be assumed to reach the extent of empowerment. The concept of identity is important because this provides a focus for freedom and also fulfils a precondition of empowerment. Thus, the feminist discourse in general has to take up the question of identity.

Women’s approach to the problem of establishing their identity is again different in the East and the West. In the west, women often equate identity with independence and equality with men. In India the guiding principle appears to be cooperation. In spite of conflicts the Indian women have learnt to assert herself as an autonomous human being. Her responses to her femaleness have been diverse and differ according to her class and upbringing. Moreover in India economic freedom is more important than sexual freedom because it subjects them to male tyranny. The exploitation of women, male chauvinism, patriarchal injustice, relegating women to second class citizenship in practice, and stultification of women in marriage and their loss of identity are same in the writings of Western and Indian women writers. But there are some different aspects are there in the Indian novels. In India a large section of the population lives under the poverty line and so the novelists naturally take up the economic problems than sexual and psychological issues. They are relating the need of economic freedom to all the problems of women.
and they consider psychological sufferings of women about the culture, conflict between tradition and modernity, and harmonizing the family with career.

The localized feminist discourse has to deal with the problem of localized, cultures specific identities. The feminist discourse in India can be seen as such a localized discourse. But it is not entirely bound by its cultural context. To understand this discourse one has to see the way in which the question of identity is discussed at theoretical as well as practical levels. The issue of empowerment of woman and gender identity leads to the questions of gender discrimination and subordination of women in the particular society. The form and extent of discrimination and subordination may change not only from society to society, but also with in a single society depending on various conditions. This form is something that can be identified throws the concepts, values, norms and practices in which it is manifested. The theories and movements of empowerment are based on assumptions of freedom, an important characteristic of human nature. The clarity of these concepts is essential at this level. Empowerment in this context is 'An achievement of the right to know'. Knowledge does not mean knowing what or any theoretical knowledge. However the knowledge makes them aware of their known existence as real human beings. It is this knowledge which liberates woman from the old clutches of thoughts and then provides wings to thoughts. It is essential to know what one is - 'What is one's identity'. If they are not free they cannot achieve the right to know. Knowing once identity is the base to achieving the empowerment.

The concept of freedom is difficult to assign any profound meaning. Freedom is usually understood us freedom from exploitation, injustice and other evils. It may signify the capacity to do something as well to take independent decisions. The feminist theories concentrate on these two senses of freedom and they have related the issue of freedom to the idea of gendered identity.

The senses of freedom such as "Freedom from" and "Freedom to" (Meena Kelkar, Identity, Freedom and Empowerment, 25) presuppose that freedom is something to be achieved, to be demanded, or to be given. It is not a matter of 'Having' but a matter of 'Being'. Freedom is a natural dimension of human existence. It is a state of mind where in one can doubt and question everything and therefore it is so intense, active and vigorous that it throws away every form of dependents,
slavery and acceptance. Thus freedom does not mean freedom from external things but freedom from our own internal prejudices that have created bondage for us.

At this level it is essential to understand the difference between culture and tradition. The term culture refers to art, religion, literature and everything that is created by human beings. It is transmitted through various traditions which are handed down from generation to generation. Our identity is shaped by following the tradition which represents the culture. Tradition acts as a vehicle of culture. Tradition gives the impact on the individual's psyche and decides the character of the person in the society. However, the social and economical environments add their influences to mould the particular social behaviour. The tradition and culture of India for a long time provides the male dominated view to men and women. This strictly becomes a barrier to see beyond the past and go for the future freely. The feminist theory in India has to understand the concepts of the culture and the tradition of India before analyzing the concepts of freedom, identity and empowerment. Attaining one's own identity is the first step to reach the levels of freedom and empowerment. Indian feminism deals with how Indian women have to understand their present position in the traditional, patriarchal society, and how they have to reach the level of 'self-identity', i.e. their inner potentials, and how they have to accomplish the bliss of complete knowledge and freedom. The question of freedom in socio-cultural setting is the main concern of Indian writers. Women are presented as fighting for their rights and identity as well there are pictures of woman as timid and pleasant, true to the age-old traditions of India. Thus, the Indian writers portray traditional and modern women in their writings.

As compared to the west, in India there are limited writers who can be called as militant feminists. In India people are not ready to accept the concepts of feminism as there was a strong impact of the rules of Manu demonstrating the social behavior of women. It has been very difficult to Indian women to come out of the traditional society. In India since ages a woman's role in life was strictly listed out as daughter, wife and mother. In all these roles she had to follow the norms set by the tradition. In all stages women are expected to be the dependent and subordinate to men. There is no separate identity as a human being to woman. Things are changing nowadays as there is enlightenment in especially amongst sections such as education and material prosperity. The new generation of women in India has the desire to assert itself. But the trouble is there in their mind when there is traditional restrictions and pervasive discriminations which have the strong impact on them. The impact of tradition is so rigorous that the women in India are not ready to
come out of it easily. This conflict of Indian woman was clearly portrayed in words by many Indian writers in English.

In the 20th century there has been a transition from romance to realism, poetry to prose and from medievalism to modern. Writers like Bankim and Tagore first observed the position of Indian women. They noted the potential expression of an author in describing Indian women characters. Many realistic women characters have been created by writers like Prem Chand, Khandelkar, Sarad Chandra. Tagore’s *Streepatra* can be regarded as the first feminist work in India. Tagore's *Binodhini* is another most convincing female character. She rebels against the harshness of orthodox family. She fights alone for her happiness.

The first generation of Indian writers in English the Trio- Mulkraj Anand, R.K.Narayan, and Raja Rao had their concentration on the major theme of that time, the freedom struggle. They missed to pay attention to the emancipation of women though there was an obvious participation of women in the freedom struggle.

Anand champions the cause of the have-nots in *The Old Woman and the Cow*. His portrayal of the heroine is a fine example of the emancipation of women. He calls Indian woman as 'the poorest of the poor'. His famous novel *Old woman and the Cow* he has portrayed Gowri as the modern mother India. Narayan presents a gallery of the meek and submissive wives and also the vibrant and radical women in his novels. The women in the novels of Raja Rao are the victims of domestic injustice and tyrannical tradition. But his suggestion is that they could not come out of their dilemma. The strong belief in Indian customs deprives him from offering any concrete solution to the women’s issue.

Balachandra Rajan is another important writer who contributed significantly to the women's problems dealing with psychological insight. He tried to eschew emotional chauvinism. His writing aims at reintegration of human beings and revolution of all values. In his novel *The Dark Dancer* he portrays two different women characters namely Cynthia and Kamala representing the new spirit from the West and the typical doomed Indian woman respectively.

Raja Rao regards maternity as the most sacred of earthly manifestation. He envies woman as she can give birth to a child. It is woman who does the task of the continuity of social life. Bhabani Bhattacharya gives the optimistic and realistic pictures of women. His novels present tender charming and virtuous women who even work for social changes. The virtuous women
become victims and suffer a lot. But they face the misery and suffering with invincible spirit. His famous novel *Music of Mohini* presents the charming and vivacious Mohini suffering as a victim of the taboos of village life by the big House Bachelor. His other novels such as *He who Rides a Tiger* and *A Goddess Named Gold* also describe the tyranny of the patriarchal society on cultured women.

The writings of men give examples of two extremes – “highlighting their weaknesses or deifying them and putting them on a pedestal, making the characters seem unreal” (Qtd. in Y.S. Sunita Reddy, *A Feminist Perspective on the Novels of Shashi Deshpande*, 17) the male writers missed a great opportunity to support the emancipation of women in their writings.

On the other hand, women writers are very nearer to the reality in portraying women characters. They have been establishing the Indian women psyche through their pen. The Indian writers have to concentrate on the psychological problems of Indian women rather than the refined emotions as in case of Western writers. The problem of poverty and as a consequence the degradation of womanhood are the central themes dealt in most of the Indian novels. There is a dilemma in the minds of Indian women tormenting between the tradition and modernity. Indian Scenario has different settings in the family and society. The joint family systems and its traditional clutches stopped them to come out of them to obtain modernity. The modern revolutionary spirit lured them a lot. These problems of Indian psyche with the typical Indian setting are the main theme of most of the Indian woman writers. In India economic freedom for women is more important than sexual one because it often subjects them to male tyranny. Even when the women writers describe the psychological and sexual issues they trace them to economic issues.

Marriage is the privileged locus of the interaction of the two sexes. It is the agency that reflects and regulates our attitude towards sexuality. It produces a single social unit where differences among individuals are seemingly dissolved under one name-the name of the father. Marriage has been problematised in the feminist writing and it has been viewed as the patriarchy to keep the woman in the permanent subjugation to man. Feminist theories maintain that marriage cannot be viewed as ‘the logical culmination of man and woman relationship but as a social institution sanctified to serve the perpetuation of woman’s enslavement’. Most of the novels in Indian fiction revolve around the theme of traditional and modernity as well the question of marriage. Arnold Weinstein points out,
To maintain a relationship over time (formerly known as the concept of marriage) entails energies other than passion, and indeed poses problems that are unknown to passion the energies in question have to do with fidelity, evolving feelings and the like… coming together is possible for any one; staying together is the challenge to all parties involved… for it is an act of volition, the foisting of man-made pattern on the heterogeneous randomness of the species. *(The Fiction of Relationship, 25)*

The institution of marriage involves the problem of maintaining the harmony among the diversities. The Indian marriages pose the inequality in almost all the stages of marriage. There is no part given to a woman to play in the marriage. The Indian women are subjected to be in the second position in the concept of marriage. Whether marriage is a blissful coming together of equal voices speaking in unison or as the site of continuous conflict between individuals asserting their differences, women cannot escape the structure prescribed by marriage and the patriarchal interest it serves and sustains. Only if structures that control the social as well cultural order have been transformed by changing the politics of language, the existing tradition can be revolutionized.

In India the problem of tradition and modernity is dealt with cooperation. Though there is a conflict Indian woman has learnt the assertion of her identity, an autonomous human being. The responses to her femaleness have been diverse and differ according to her class and upbringing. The social setup has important control over the personality of women. Moreover the exploitation of women in various ways, male chauvinism, patriarchal injustice, downgrading women as second class citizens, diminishing women in marriage and losing their identity are seen in the novels of women novelists in India.

A line of Indian women novelists in English begins with ToruDutt. Her novels *Bianca* and *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d’Arvers* reveal the sweet and sour experience of the novelist. The two novels depict the agony and catharsis arise out of sisterly love. The characters are Spanish and French but the sincerity and purity of love reflects the core of Indian woman.

Cornelia Sorabji, a Parsi Christian is a great figure in the Indian novels. Her important works are *Love and Life behind Purdah* (1901) *Sun-Babies in the child life in India* (1904) and *Between the Twilight* (1908) She reveals the various moods and vestures such as
tragedy, ecstasy, comedy, that are experienced under 'purdah'. She presents the realistic and miserable picture of Indian women.

There was a new vision after the Second World War. It was obvious in the works of Kamala Markandeya and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, the most outstanding personalities in the field of social artistic novels. Kamala Markandeya’s first novel, *Nectar in a sieve* tells about the protagonist Rukmani who plays the traditional role of a woman and tries to accommodate her other roles as a human being within that limit. The novel treats the theme of hunger and starvation. The socio-economic conditions affect Rukmani and her daughter. They suffer blow after blow. He novelist gives the clear account of the social customs and traditions and describes the sufferings of the women. Her other novels *Some Inner Fury* gained international popularity to her. It deals with the complexity of man–woman relationship. It is a tragedy engineered by politics. *A Silence of desire* describes Sarojini who deals with her problems in her own way. This novel unfolds the layer of the spiritual and mystic vision of India. *Possession* is the novel with women characters as tyrannical possessors. Her novels depict women as a source of great strength to save the male protagonist from collapse. *The Coffer Dams* is a fine blending of art ad truth, feeling and form. *The Nowhere man* deals with the thee of the anti-immigrant wave of the sixties. *The Golden Honey Comb* deals with the problem of female psyche and the preservation of female identity.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s novels deal with urban middle class Indian life and the domestic problem in the joint family system in Hindu society. She writes about the corporate life of two or three families. Her novels have fine analysis of the personal relationships, man–woman relationships and domestic life. Her novels *To who Show Will* (1955) *The Nature of Passion* (1956) *Esmond in India* (1958) say about husband hunting or wife hunting. *The House Holder* (1960) and *A Backward Place* (1965) are about mutual understanding of the couple. *Get Ready For Battle* (1962) deals with the separation of the couple.

Anita Desai concerns with the psyche of the modern Indian women. She brings forth the hidden depths of the minds of her characters in her novels. She comes out with the hidden and silent thoughts. She pays much attention to the ‘psyche’ than to the appearance. Her power to expose the truth in her words, places her near to Dostoevsky, Proust, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and Henry James. Her women characters are intelligent but sensitive. They feel difficult to adjust themselves in the mechanical setup. But Anita Desai does not go for any solutions to their
problems. Anita Desai gives importance to the upbringing of men and women. Her protagonists are not brought up in a healthy way. They are pampered or totally neglected. Mothers in her novels are not providing the prompt guidance to their children as they themselves are unaware of their status in the society. The children then rely on their husband for their identity.

*Cry the Peacock* is a tragic story of Maya who is craving for identity, sympathy and understanding in her own way. Her characters are not brought up in a healthy way. They cannot assert themselves in the childhood as they do not receive proper upbringing from their mother. They depend on their husbands for identity. Maya is also the same spoilt child and her rebellious nature turns her into 'neurosis'. Monisha in *Voices of the city* is a pure soul, leading a soulless mechanical life. With the unfulfilled psychological emotional needs, she commits suicide. She found no way of expressing her identity other than killing herself. *Fire on the Mountain* depicts the life of Nanda Kaul, showing the defiant, destructive character from the darker side of life. Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* belongs to the same group. Her childhood influence has moulded her personality. She lived a solitary life and there is no way out to express her identity. *In clear light of day* the life of Tara explains the same influence of her childhood.

It is evident in the novels of Indian writers that the Indian woman can endure almost any injustice to serve to her husband and her family. The novels of Kamala Markandeya illustrate the point clearly. Rukmani in *Nectar in a Sieve* finds her expression only by losing it in service. Nalini in *A Handful of Rice* does not believe in the expression of her personality by asserting her place. She obeys her husband like a ‘tongueless domestic animal’. Chastity is another aspect of expression of identity for an Indian woman. In *Nowhere Man* the spiritual chastity is depicted as vital for Indian women through the character Vasantha. Her psyche also gets moulded according to the social norms and conditions. The women psyche is suppressed by the age old terms and these conditions are embedded in the subconscious mind and her actions are guided by the collective unconscious. In *Two virgins*, Lalitha realizes that women can preserve their identity even within the limits of the social conventions.

Anita Desai and Kamala Markandeya belong to the previous generation. They depict women's woes in the patriarchal society. Female identity and independence are rare things in their novels. The rapid increase in the women's education in India in the last two decades has brought changes in their thinking as well in the mode of living consequently; the new
A new generation of women in India has a desire to assert itself. The works of new generation novelists like Shashi Deshpande and Nayantara Sahgal are filled with the challenging note and the questioning tone. These novelists are more assertive about women’s identity and freedom. Shashi Deshpande projects the society where the transition takes place. They deal with the problems of women with the urban base.

Nayantara Sahgal is another prominent women writer. She is a novelist of politics. She deals with issues of women later they became major issues in the feminist movement. There are only limited feminist ideas found in her novels. But the portrayal of the woman characters is exemplary as her protagonists are not ready to be ordinary traditional women. They are in search of emancipation away from tradition. Her fiction focuses attention an Indian woman’s search for sexual freedom and self-realisation. Sahgals' women are of two types- traditional and modern women, revolting against tradition. She writes sensitively about the problems of women because of sexist bias in the patriarchal society. In her novel, In Day In Shadow, she presents a sensitive account of the sufferings of a woman because she decides to divorce her husband. The protagonist Simrit felt diminished because of the stigma attached to the divorce and also by the terms of divorce which compelled her to pay a tax of an income which she cannot use. In her another novel Rich Like Us, Ram inflicts great emotional violence on his wives, Rose and Mona. Both women being aware of their exploitation are in silence as this is the habit of them to be the victims of exploitation and injustice.

Sahgal deals with the impersonal politics in the novels along with the man- woman relationship as the main theme. She restricts herself in portraying the particular upper class of the society. Her novels present the upper class women and how they refuse to remain chained in the names of tradition and subordinate rules of the male dominated society, and how they defy these rules and norms of tradition in search of emancipation.

Kamala Das the famous poetess has contributed two novels from her account to the field of feminism. The Alphabet of Lust (1980) portrays an unhappy and frustrated wife who manages to be successful defying all social and moral barriers. She searches for identity and at last succeeds to attain power and glory. A Doll for the Child Prostitute deals with the struggle of the Child Prostitute Mira, who was in search for opportunity to herself as a self-respecting. It is obvious that her novels are about the woman's quest for identity.
Vimla Raina is known for her bestselling novel, *Ambapali*, saying the history of Vaishali. Ambapali is the first woman to be admitted in the fold of Lord Buddha. Rama Mehta's first novel *Inside The Haveli* (1977) has won the Sahitya Academy Award in 1979. It describes the life of a modern girl Geetha and how she has to lead the secluded life under the purdah in Haveli.

Shobha De is modern novelist and she is famous for portraying the sexual mania of the commercial world. In narration of incident she is very frank and straight forward. She explores women psychology. In 1988, her first novel *Socialite Evening* brought her into limelight. A thorough study of her novels shows her perspective portrayal of the secret depths of the human psyche. Her characterisation is accurate. She has a racy and captivative style invoking vivid images and compelling the readers to identify himself or herself with the characters and the situations. She has tried her best to espouse the moral and spiritual breakdown of modern society where women long for pleasure and want to fly freely in the sky of freedom.

Mahasweta Devi is the winner of the prestigious Jnanpith and Magassasay Awards for the novel, *Mother of 1084*. She contends that women should not be submissive and passive. Woman should realise her inner strength. The novel *Mother of 1084* presents the psychological and emotional crisis of a mother whose son is lying dead in the police morgue. Manju Kapur is the winner of common wealth writer's prize for the Eurasia region for her novel *Difficult Daughters*. She deals with the psyche of modern woman and the social relationships.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, with a bit of autobiographical touch presents a woman who considers marriage as the journey's end of her life. It is about the three generation of women with the emphasis of the protagonist’s mother. The novel won her Booker prize. Her second book *The End of Imagination* though short but revolutionary deals with the author's strong revolt against nuclearization in India and abroad.

Undeniably the modern educated young Indian woman's crusade against years of slavery, suffering and suppression is a serious one. However, in the process of this crusade, we see her suffering from certain weakness and complexes, which have been very honesty highlighted by these Indian women novelists.

The modern, educated, Indian young woman has gradually realized is man's overlooking of woman's wishes, likes and dislikes. Until the sixties and seventies, man alone was looked upon as bread-winner and woman's household-work was considered secondary. This situation made
man's position central/nuclear and his wishes and desires supreme; and that of woman's as marginal and her wishes and desires redundant. Naturally, she gradually merged her dreams into those of man's. Of late, she has started receiving education and accepting jobs, Like any man, she has become a 'directly money-earner' too. Now she not only earns money but also does her household work. However, man's attitude towards her wishes and desires has continued to be as before, one of negligence.

The greatest problem for women is the preservation and expression of their identity. They have to face what Margaret Drabble strongly calls 'the situation of being a woman' in this ‘man’s world’. Most of the heroines of the novelists face the problem of identity. The psychological factors are responsible for the sufferings of the women characters in most of the novels. They represent the real psyche of Indian woman and therefore the problem of identity is based on the psychological factors of women.

Shashi Deshpande holds a significant place among the women novelists. It is said that "writers appear not to have pained much attention to the recent phenomenon of the educated earning wife and her adjustment or maladjustment in the family" (Meena Shirwadkar, Image of woman in Indo-English novel, 14). Her protagonists are young modern women who are inquest for identity in the male dominated and tradition bound society. Her flawless depiction of the psyche of urban middle class women is present in all her novels. Shashi Deshpande is writing at the transition of tradition to modern. The woman in this state is neither free nor dependent. She is in between the two. There is an urge for the identity and independence in them. The collision of culture and the revolutionary spirit of woman are vividly portrayed in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. The main theme of her novels is redefining the role of new woman and reinforcing the state of confusion imposed by the age old tradition in the patriarchal society. Shashi Deshpande's novels depict the Indian Women who are at the cross roads and the protagonists suffer to overcome the cultural barriers on the way to 'self-identity'. She attempts to closely analyze man-woman relationship within the perimeters of family and the contemporary social set-up. The women she portrays are educated urban middle class women who are in search of their 'total personality' in the fragments of shattered roles in family, career and society. She primarily focuses on the captivating problems and the suffocating environs of her heroines, who struggle
hard in this malicious and callous male-dominated world to discover their true identity. Deshpande has thrashed women’s problems and situations in a fast-changing social scenario. We cannot brand her either as 'typical Western liberated or an orthodox Indian one'.

She is an outstanding Indian novelist with four volumes of short stories four children’s books and six novels to her credit. She was born and brought up in the Dharwad, Karnataka. She is the daughter of the renowned Kannada dramatist and Sanskrit Scholar Sriranga. She graduated in Economics from Elphistone College, Bombay and in Law from the Government Law College, Bangalore. Much later she took a post graduate degree in English from the Mysore University. She married Dr. Deshpande a neuro-pathologist in 1962. She began her career as a writer very casually. She did not have any intention of taking the writing career. Deshpande says of her experience of beginning her career, "there are three things in my 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". (Y.S. Sunita Reddy, A Feminist Perspective on the novels of Shashi Despande, 20)

She tried her hand in writing when she wanted to write down her experiences of her stay in England. She was further encouraged to write short stories which were published in reputed magazines. They were later compiled into four volumes, the first collection of short stories ‘the Legacy’ was published in 1972. Her other collection of short stories are: It was dark, the miracle, it was the nightingale and the intrusion and other stories. Some of the stories are developed into novels. Some share many of their concerns. In the preface to her book Legacy and other stories we note the remarks of G.S. Amur about the central theme of her writing: "Woman's struggle, in the context of contemporary Indian society, to find and preserve her identity as wife, mother and most important of all as human being is Shashi Deshpande's major concern as a creative writer, and this appears in all her important stories." (27) In respect of technique also these stories contain the germs of most of the strengths and limitations of her novels. Deshpande generally has the heroine as the narrator, and employs a kind of stream of consciousness technique. All the novels of Deshpande hold the power to deliver the problems of middle class women in a genuine sense. Her novels picture the elements of personal experiences. Her psychological insight into her characters equals her to the masters of the genre.
Till date Shashi Deshpande has published nine novels - *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980) *If I Die Today* (1982), *Come up and Be Dead* (1983) *Roots and Shadows* (1983) *That Long Silence* (1988) *The Binding Vine* (1992) *A Matter of Time* (1996). While her novels were taking shape she also wrote four books for children. Though not original *A Sum-Adventure, The Only Witness* and *The Hidden Treasure* are on the line of Enid Blyton, who has defined the parameters of children's books in the west. Her fourth book for children *The Naryanapur incident* and this is based on the Quit India Movement and the role of children in it. Despite their immaturity these novels are readable and the last of them made a great impact on the world of children's literature. Deshpande's reputation rests on her mature novels. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is her 'favourite work'. As she said in an interview, "It has a simple theme and fewer characters. It gripped me so much that I whipped through the writing" (Qtd. in R.S.Pathak, *The Making of the Novelist*, 15). The story deals with the ego clash between the husband and wife. “The wife had a better job and there was aggressive and surly. That set it off” (15) *Roots and Shadows* "started out by trying to be a detective novel" (15) and is a continuation of her short story themes. (Shashi Deshpande talks to Lakshmi Holmstrom) When she was asked for her best work she answered an interviewer, Geetha Gangadhavan, that *That Long Silence* is more meaningful than any other of her works as it "deals with a much larger issue- the long silence of women"(*The Making of the Novelist*, 15).

Among her more than a dozen fictional works, some of her works made a niche. *Roots and Shadows* was awarded the Thirumathi Rangammal prize for the best Indian novel of 1982-83. That Long Silence received the Sahitya Academy Award in1991. Her collection of short stories *The Legacy* is prescribed for the graduate students in Columbia University. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* has been translated into German and Russian. Her novel *That Long Silence* published by Virago Press, London has established a considerable reputation. Her novels have been characterised with racy style of narration with crispy language. Like any other writer she has not satisfied with what she has achieved till date. She told Geetha Gangadhavan "none of my books so far realised my dream of a good novel. I wish I will one day be able to write one such book which will survive the test of time. My best book is yet to come" (Qtd. in Prasanna Sree, *Women in the novels of Shashi Deshpande*, 21).This shows her serious efforts to venture into fresh fields and pastures new.

Her characters occupy a pivotal position in her novels. Shashi Deshpande herself said, "every novels starts with people". (Qtd. in R.S.Pathak, *The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande*, 16) She has carefully
avoided creating wooden characters to serve her need. She excels in portraying women characters. She never idealises or sentimentalizes women characters. In her own words her characters are "human beings one sees around in the world"(16). She has created women as they are, not as super strong. Her characters have strength within themselves and they remain uncrushed inspite of their challenges and hostilities. She has created authentic women characters, flesh and blood with recognisable credentials. She is successful in describing their problems ad plights, yearnings and aspirations, failures and foibles.

Shashi Deshpande's novels are like those of Jane Austen as they are narrow in range. They are the more or less fictionalisation of personal experiences. Most of the novels picturise the life of typical middle class housewife. Her main concern is 'the urge to find oneself to create space for oneself to grow on one's own'. One significant thing about her novels is that they have recurrence of certain themes. The predicament of women especially those of educated, middle class women are given predominance. As R.S. Pathak says, "many of her characters are persons who are frustrated either sexually or professionally. Her novels generally centre around family relationships- particularly the relationship between husband and wife and the latter's dilemmas and conflicts"(17). Deshpande has depicted the human relationships, the bondage between person to person and person to society relationships. She as a creative writer is concern with these primary relationships and gives more importance to the former one. She says that her preoccupation is with 'interpersonal relationships and human emotions'. To her relationships are important as no one can live without them and human bonds are needed for women to live in spite of rigid rules. The society has assigned rules to women as a wife or mother, they do that but if the rules are further rigid then women are unhappy. This is the key note of her writing. She says, "this is what I have tried to convey in my writing. What I do not agree with is the idealization of motherhood- the false and sentimental notes that accompany it" (17).

According to Shashi Deshpande, women must not be reduced to the level of a breeding machine. She says,

I have a very strong feeling that until very recently women in our society have been looked upon just as 'breeding animals' they had no other role in life. I have a strong objection to treating any human being in that manner..... The whole chronology of their life centres around childbirth. .... The stress laid upon the feminine functions,
at the cost of all your potentials as an individual, enraged me. ... Maybe too much of thinking has made me express a sort of dislike for the purely physical aspects of feminine life, making it seem as if I am totally against all feminine functions, which is not the truth at all. (18)

Shashi Deshpande seems to belittle the physical functions of women, but her writing emphasis the fact that woman is not a conglomerate of such functions. Further women have to be judged as par with their male counterparts on the basis of her potentials.

Her novels are made up of plausible stories with authentic characters. There is no shadow abstraction – ‘airy nothings’ without ‘a local habitation and a name’. She presents the setting and life of India in eighties. She gives the account of life as it is not ‘what it should be’.

Her novels mainly deals with the predicament of educated middle class Indian women, their inner conflict and quest for identity, issue pertaining to parent-child relationships, marriage and sex and their exploitation and disillusionment and hence Shashi Deshpande is called as 'feminist'. She is against any categorisation. She says that she writes as an individual and does not like one calling it as women's writing or feminist writing. She hates 'women's lib' separating women's writing for it is like 'self-defeating'.

A close study of her novels and short stories reveals her intelligence, articulation, and how she is free from any prejudice regarding gender. But at the same time her writing has been highly sensitive to the issues involving women. Dealing with man-woman relationship, she intrigues the reader to question her stand on feminism. She is perhaps "The only Indian author who has made a bold attempt to give voice to the frustration and disappointments of women despite her vehement denial of being a feminist". (16)

To Deshpande, her writing is not about man vs woman issue at all. Human relationship is the main theme of her writing. But the women characters show the feminist ideas and ideologies in the Indian setting. Almost every novel of Deshpande has the idea of feminism in the characterisation as well the theme. The woman protagonist of her novels represents the new Indian woman, the story deals with the efforts of the new woman to understand herself and preserve herself as a wife, mother and above all as human being in the traditional bound, male dominated society. Thus 'feminism' in Indian scenario is the central scheme of Shashi Deshpande's novels. Moreover her novels give the key answer for the question of self-identity and self-assertion.
Roots and Shadows is the first full length novel written by Deshpande though it was published after The Dark Holds No Terrors, her second novel. The novel is about the agony of the protagonist Indu who tries to be free from the mental trauma when she refuses to follow the rigid codes of tradition. Later she finds herself playing the role of an ideal Indian wife. She tries to assert herself as an individual that gives a feminist stance to the novel. She develops an extra marital relationship which helps her to break herself from the emotional bondage of matrimony. It helps her to realize the possibility to exercise autonomy within the parameters of marriage. He novel gives the account of meaningless customs and rituals gross gender discrimination.

The Dark Holds No Terrors the second novel is about the male ego which denies the secondary position in marriage. Saru the protagonist enjoys economical freedom and high social status than her husband she becomes victim of her husband’s frustration he could not bear his wife’s superior status. He develops complex which comes out in the form of sexual sadism. Saru as a child is deprived of mother’s love because her mother prefers a male child to a daughter. Craving for love and in frustration Saru undergoes an arduous journey into herself. Shashi Deshpande discusses gender discrimination shown by parents towards their daughters preferring male child. There is another one level of gender discrimination that is the male ego to accept the high position of the wife in marriage.

That Long Silence the third novel tells about the perfect Indian woman Jaya. She plays her role as wife and mother. She has been a traditional wife telling the answer what her husband wants to hear. She never denies her husband's decisions. She has changed her writing career to shoot her husband's wish in a diminutive manner. She proves to be perfect housewife for traditional husband. Yet she was left all alone when she was deserted by her husband. She realizes her injustice to herself and to her writing career. She understands her mistake of being in a long silence neglecting her own voice. She is representative of the modern young woman unable to break free from the tradition.

The role of women in the family and the society is analyzed in detail referring to the woman's psyche to move along the tradition and at the same time wanting in self-identity.

In her fourth novel, The Binding Vine, Deshpande uses the personal tragedy of the protagonist Urmi to focus attention on the victims like Kalpana and Mira - victims of man's lust and women's helplessness. The novel depicts the clear picture of rape within marriage and outside
marriage. There is a hope for female bonding through the women characters. The novel shows the stock of many women characters ranging from different strata of society. The protagonist Urmila tries to assure her own personality and at the same time fights against the evils of the society. She raises her voice against the injustice done to a young girl. The psychological analysis of herself leads her to think of the upliftment of other women who are less fortunate than her.

*A Matter of Time*, Deshpande's next novel presents the metaphysical world of philosophy. The novelist is away from women's problems in the novel. The story tells about three women of three generations from the same family and narrates their tragedy and how they overwhelm them.

The novel *Small Remedies* gives the picture of biography within a biography. It is about Savitridai, the ageing doyenne of Hindustani music. She denies a marriage and home with a view to pursuing her genius. There is also the story of Leela, who gives up her respectability in order to gain love and unhappiness in equal measure.

*Come up and Be dead* and *If I die today*, are the two detective serials by Deshpande. They have been expanded and published as novels. *Come up and Be dead* deals with a serious of murders taking place in girl's school. The cheap female characters in this novel are Kshama, the school principal and Devayani, her house keeper-cousin. They are spinsters and typical examples of caught between the modern idea of freedom and the traditional need for husband and home of their own.

*If I die today* is set in the resident quarters of a large charity of where again there is a series of killings. A narrator Manju in this novel is quite different from the average Indian woman who gives marriage and mother food as the ultimate happiness in life. She resents the fact that her children are a barrier to her independence. It is easy to see that Deshpande is best at the portrayal of human relationships and the sufferings raging in the minds of her female protagonists who are unfairly treated by their parents, husbands and society in general.

The present study takes up four novels of Shashi Despande, *Roots and Shadows*, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *That Long Silence* and *The Binding Vine*. The four novels show the psychological development in the minds of the modern Indian middle class women. The protagonists of these novels portray the peculiar dilemma encountered by the Indian women in the progress of their emancipation. The psychological dilemma in their minds is caused by the 'roots' of tradition, which persist the prolong 'silence' to the patriarchal conventions of the society and
therefore the women are in the 'dark' which is the symbol of credulity but there is a ‘binding vine’ of ‘love’ to persuade them to move on.