PREFACE

As a woman, I feel that character of woman is undoubtedly interesting and is a part of study of world literature. Woman has inspired literature and has been its pivotal theme too. She is literature in herself and, therefore, a woman's presence in literature is all-pervading and this is also true of Indian English literature as well. Ever since the dawn of civilization, woman has been a myth, a metaphor, a symbol, a deity or a devil. But what is the real character of woman? what is her real nature? What is her real entity? Has she any identity of her own? Several such questions have been asked and answered? As a matter of fact, there are several characters of woman created by novelists in Indian English novels like woman as a wife, a submissive creature, a fierce rebel, a mother, a sister, a beloved, a friend and a mistress, a floozy etc.

The basic mythic and archetypal character which existed in ancient times has such a strong appeal and is so fundamental to our culture that it still continues in our literature. If we scrutinize the character of woman in
post-independence Indian English novels, various renowned novelists stand out.

When we critically scrutinize the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, we find the interesting characters of unconventional women, which indicate the growth and changes of the status of women in India. His first novel *Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1995), describes the character of non-professional floozy, Ganga Dasi. The other novel *The old Woman and the Cow* (1996), also called Gauri, presents the character of Gauri as a bold woman. In these two women characters, Anand portrays two different unconventional characters of woman—woman as a rebel and woman as a self-respecting and self-confident person. In the rest of his novels, Anand has generally portrayed the conventional characters of submissive, suffering, or exploited women.

R.K. Narayan portrays a wide range of feminine characters—from conventional to rebellious. The conventional women dominate and are shown as supporters of the institution of family. But he has identified the turmoil in the minds of women. In his
significant novel, **The Dark Room** (1938), Narayan paints for the first time the character of Savitri who makes bold to revolt against her own promiscuous husband Ramani who carries on with his colleague Shanta.

Raja Rao, upholds the mythic pattern in his novel. In **Kanthapura** (1938), he presents two different faces of women characters. The narrator, 'grand mother' represents the character of an ideal old Indian woman, while Ratna represents an unconventional character of a young Indian woman. In his Sahitya Akademi Award winning novel, **The Serpent and The Rope** (1964), Raja Rao presents Madeleine as both conventional and unconventional woman.

Bhabani Bhattacharyya assigns women a new role, that of a bridge between the East and the West, the old and the new. His six novels such as **So Many Hungers** (1947), **Music for Mohini** (1952), **He who Rides a Tiger** (1954), **A Golden Named Gold** (1960), **Shadow From Ladakh** (1966) and **A Dream in Hawaii** (1978), present typical Indian struggling women characters
such as Kajoli, Mohini, Lekha, Lakhmi, Meera and Sumita.

Manohar Malgonkar's world of fiction is male dominated in which women seem to be a little more than instruments of masculine pleasure. His novels are: Distant Drum (1960), Combat of Shadows (1962), The Prince (1963), A Bend in the Ganges (1964), and The Devil's Wind (1972)

Balchandra Rajan, another novelist of note, describes realism and fantasy in his novels. In his novel, The Dark Dancer (1959), he paints the character of Kamla as a woman in quest of identity. In Too Long in the West (1961), the character of Nalini is described as a woman concerned with selecting a suitable husband.

Kamala Markandaya is another major Indian English Woman novelist. She portrays the character of Rukmini as a conventional mother in his most famous novel Nectar in a Sieve (1954). The Character of Mira is presented as struggling between tradition and modernity in another novel, Some Inner Fury (1955). Nina is

Ruth Prawar Jhabvala is another prominent Indian English woman novelist. She has ironically portrayed the conventional character of Indian woman in her novels.

Anita Desai, the most outstanding Indian English woman novelist, has presented interesting characters of women in her novels. Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), has been delineated as a psychic case murdering her own husband for her own fulfilment of desire.

Nayantara Sahgal's few novels describe the character of 'new woman'. In her novels, Sahgal lays emphasis on freedom and a new definition of "the virtuous woman" Rashmi in *This Time of Morning* (1965), and Snriti in *The Day of Shadow* (1971), leave their homes. They are bold modern women characters.

Uma Vasudev, Shiv K. Kumar, Mrinalini Sarabhai and Rama Mehta are other significant Indian English novelists who have painted the characters of Mira, Sheila, Parvati and Geeta in their novels as 'the
liberated and promiscuous prostitutes as well as bold and traditional women characters in their novels.

But the present study is concentrated on the study of female characters in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. In her different novels, she had presented the different shades and roles of female characters of Indian middle class society as daughter, mother, wife, friend and companion to man. Her characters are neither revolutionary nor reactionary but they seek a true balance which depends upon the mutual love, cooperation and co-ordination of their husbands. Some of her characters are bold and career women who build a world of 'New Woman'. In coming chapters, the study will reveal the hidden faces of Shashi Deshpande's female characters in true colours of Indian middle class society.

In collecting materials for my study, I have consulted the different libraries. I feel thankful to the inspiring, and dynamic guidance of Hon'ble supervisor, Dr. Lalji Mishra, Head, Department of English, Research Studies and Modern European and Foreign Languages,
Kashi Naresh Government Post-Graduate College, Gyanpur, Sant Ravidas Nagar Bhadohi and Convenor, Board of Studies and Research Degree Committee, Vir Bahadur Singh Purvanchal University, Jaunpur.

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