Chapter I: INTRODUCTION
In the Contemporary times Indian Writing in English has acquired a wide dimension. Multiple and diverse themes are being incorporated thereby enriching the writing of Indian English writers. Some of favorite themes are man–woman relationship, alienation, loss of Identity etc. Meenakshi Mukherjee feels that alienation is “A very common theme” (1971: 83). Renowned critic, Pritish Nandy also finds in them the specimens of “a rootless literature, totally alienated from the people, unconcerned with Indian realities (1975: 89). Novel in India acquired considerable importance during 1980s. It has acquired the same importance that it had acquired in the 18th century England. Ian Watt remarked about 18th century English novel.

This (The previous) Literature Traditionalism was first and most fully challenged by the novel, whose primary criterion was truth to individual experience-Individual experience which is always unique and therefore always new. The novel is thus the logical literary vehicle of a culture which... has set an unprecedented value on originality, on the novel (1957: 13).

The English novel in India has achieved a new impetus with Indian woman joining the field during the post independence phase. For woman freedom meant not merely freedom from British rule, but release from centuries of male domination-and male ordained social and cultural norms. In earlier fiction written by male novelists women, were represented in one dimensional manner as virgin heroine or tempters, the daughter or all sacrificing mother the pativarta or the redundantly widow. In portrayal of woman character, the male writers were governed by general notion that “woman is innately weak, emotional, enjoys dependence is limited in capacities for work” (Karen Horney, 1967: 231). But such portrayal is based of women in English novels in India has to face tremendous challenge when
host of women writers began to show their original talent in fiction writing. During this period there was an upsurge in fiction written by women writers who were aware of their individuality, their aspiration, their strength as well as their weakness. Prominent women writers in English are Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Nayan tara Sahgal and Shashi Deshpande. Among them, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Bharati Mukharjee belong to urban upper middle class and English educated society.

They depict women with both the negative and the positive attributes. Women are no longer objects because they become the subject in their novels. The major aspects of their novels are: “Power women, the deviousness of women, helplessness of women, courage of women” (Indian women novelists Vol-5, 1991: 34). These novelists depict women “who aspre attempt and strive to be there true selves” (k, Meera Bai, 1994-95: 138). Truly speaking a new approach to fiction in English in India was initiated by Anita Desai. Desai is differce from Jhabwala and Kamala Markandaya in treatment of themes. Srinivasa Iyengar has most appropriately remarked:

In Prawer Jhabwala’s work the social background is rather more important than the characters who enact the various comedies, tragi-comedies and farces, in kamala Markandayas the accent is as much on the principal characters as on the divers backgrounds: economic, political, cultural social, but in Anita Desai’s two novels, the inner climate, the climate of Sensibility that lours or clears or rumbles like thunder or suddenly blazes forth like lightning is more compelling than the outer weather, visible action. Her forte, in other words, is the exploration of sensibility (1963: 464).

To be more precise, the history of Indian women novelists in English begins with Toru Dutt who died at the age of twenty one. The prominent
Major Thematic Concerns in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande

themes in the novels Bianca and Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers deal with the autobiographical projections. The agony and catharsis arising out of sisterly love and brevement in these two novels are very beautifully projected. The novelist, delineates her characters in typical Indian style, full of love and affection, sincerity and purity, which characterize the core of an ideal Indian woman.

After Toru, Dutt Cornelia Sorabji, was another great Indian woman writer various moods of women confined within purdah have been revealed in Soravjis novels. She tends to Satirized the hypocrisy of male in society. Her realistic and miserable picture of the Indian women is really superb.

A new dimension, a new vision, and a new milestone was advised by Indian women novelists. After the second world war, the prominent women novelists of the period were, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Vimala Rani, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Mahasweta Devi, Manju Kapur, Arundhati Roy and Jhumpa Lahari. Kamala Markandaya is known for A Silence of Desire, Nectar in a Sieve, Two Virgins, Possession, etc. She portrays Indian society where woman is relegated to secondary possession and double standard that is practiced in society.

Jhabvala's writings deal with various sets of Indianness. Her major novels are Heat and Dust. To whom she will, commenting on the theme, her novels Asnani writes:

R.P. Jhabvala writes about the furious social scuffing in the present day India. All her novels are full of local colour and clamour, dealing with the young who are inert, romantic and non-too-wise, and the old who are cool, calculating and rigid. She describes the head-on collision between the traditional and the
modern, the east and the west, and the confusion that follows in the wake of these collisions (1985: 80).

After Jhabvala Nayantara Sahgal, is the prominent name among Indian women novelists. Generally known as political columnists her writing is characterised by simplicity and boldness. Her novels portray the contemporary incidents and political realities. Her fiction also draws attention towards Indian woman's search for freedom and self realism. The Day in Shadow, A Time to Be Happy, This Time of Morning, are some of her major works.

Among all these novelists Anita Desai, stands apart. She dives due into the inner psyche of the protagonist. Regarding her study of human psyche, one has to remember Virginia Woolf, "Life is not series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged, life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end" (1953: 177). To her credit a dozen of novels including, Cry the Peacock, Bye-Bye Blackbird, Fire on the Mountain, and The Clear Light of Day. She has heralded a new era in the realm of psychological portrayal of the character.

Vimala Rani is a writer of historical novels whereas Rama Mehta's - Inside the Haveli, deals with the confrontation between culture and civilization, between city and village.

In the modern age the novel writing in English is witnessing unprecedented changes. Several radical feminists have come forward with their revolutionary prepositions and discourses to bring a radical change in the existing social system. Shobha De is one of such radical feminists; she has been attacked by many critics most scathingly for portrayal the sexual
mania of the commercial world. Commenting on the nature and the theme of De's novels Amarnath Prasad writes,

A through study of Shobha De's novels show the novelists perceptive portrayal of the secret depths of the human psyche; her accurate characterization, her sancy racy and captivating style which invokes vivid images and compels the reader to identify himself or herself with the characters and situations. In short Shobha De has tried her best to expose the moral and spiritual breakdown of modern society in which a helpless and forsaken women longs for pleasure and wants to fly freely in the sky of freedom. Though she has been severely criticized by the champions of ethics and morality, we should not forget that whatever she has penned down they are all fine pieces of poetic and metaphopric which haunts our mind long after reading (2001: 15).

Shashi Deshpande is the Brightest star at the scene of Indian writing in English. Born in 1938 in a small town of Dharwad, She is the daughter of a famous Kannad play writer Adya Rangachar Shriranga. She took up the job of writing in English late in her life. She states in her interview the cause of her writing,

There was really nothing. It was very strange. May be it was there waiting inside and suddenly at one moment, it came out until then, I was looking around to see what I could do. I was very unhappy not doing anything, just looking after the home and children. It was perhaps a kind of claustrophobic existence. I could feel something building up in me and that caused the outburst. Otherwise, it would have perhaps led to a breakdown (Denying the otherness II, 20 Nov. 1994).

Deshpande denies infect of having been influence of any writers. But she has equally acknowledged long lasting impression of Jane Austen Her writings evince the influence of Simone De Beauvoir; Betty Friedan and Gernaine Greer. She maintains that they have "helped to place (her)...
confusions and put them in order" (A woman's world, 1987: 09) belonging ethos, milieu and customs and practices of Karnataka and Maharashtra. She has used English as a medium of her writing she writes,

To those of us who write in English it is neither a foreign language nor the language of the colonizer, but the language of creativity. Whether the writing is rootless, alienated or elitist, should be judged from the writing, not from the language. My writing comes out of myself, the society I live in, it is shaped, as I am, by my family, my ancestry. The place I was born in the place I live in, the culture I am steeped in. The fact that the writing is in English changes none of these things (Language No Bar, 1985: 10).

Deshpande belongs to the middle class Marathi-Kannadiga background and was educated in English at a local school in Dharwad. These influences have played an important role in shaping her skills as a writer. The language which she uses has been called simple realistic and transparent. She maintains a down-to-earth approach in depicting her protagonists. Her protagonists are no heroines with extra ordinary qualities. She is very realistic in the approach. Deshpande seeks to explore her experiences and approach to Indian women in the domestic setup. That is related to:

the presumption that (a woman) is an inferior being, of carrying the burden of being unwanted female child, of having to battle an ingrained, deeply intrenched patriarchal System all of which give rise to problems specific to their sex (Deshpande Demythifying Womanhood, 1995: 08).

All her women protagonists are drawn from middle class society. Their stereotypical values are attached to social roles. The middle class women find themselves unable to defy the traditional patriarchal norms of society and attempt to realise and perceived their identity not only as
women but also as human beings. The Novelist tries to assume the role of female Tolstoy in so far as creating realistic picture about woman is concerned. In this regard Sarla Palkar says,

> For a long time, woman has existed as a gap, as an absence in literature ... This is not only true of the fiction created by men, but also by women, who have mostly confined themselves to writing love-stories or dealing with the experiences of women in a superficial manner – (which) represses the truth about the majority of their sisters and their lives (1989:163).

Deshpande focuses on women's issues, she does not write for publicity. She is least bothered about name and fame that is why she could not achieve popularity and catch the attention of the critics and readers until the publication of That Long Silence. Probably the basic reason of her writing is to create her own world. Through creative writing she finds an exploration of wide range of experiences particularly a status of women in the society.

Deshpande has experienced for herself the sufferings and inferiority of women in India. Whereas other women novelists like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Pravbr Jhabvala have portrayed this aspect of woman's life without having the first experience of it in their novels. But Deshpande has projected this aspect of Indian woman with more sensitively with understanding as she belongs to this category. Therefore her woman character is more authentic, credible and realistic. She does not try to make her women characters stronger than they are in real life. Instead she has exposed their passivity, anxiety and confusion. Deshpande rewrites the Indian idea of womanhood. In this context, Atrey and Kirpal say:

> Deshpande compares her protagonists with women from an earlier generation as well as with women from the lower classes
in her novels. Through her representations of these women, She suggests that some of the older women and the lower class women, although without the freedom and choice of the protagonists are strong women determined to better their lives. The protagonists learn from these minor characters that it is they who have to make life possible by standing up for themselves and resisting oppression. By portraying the minor characters and the protagonists together. Deshpande seems to be suggesting a reworking of the Indian idea of womanhood which both recognizes the reality of Indian society and repudiates stereotypes about women (1989: 121 - 22).

Most of the protagonist of Deshpande find that they have passively accepted their socially ordained roles. A woman must be true to herself inorder to realize herself. The novelists is of the opinion that woman must, assert themself and should not succumb to pressers of patriarchy. But at the same time, she must not challenge the traditional institutions like marriage and family. She believes that everybody should live within the relationship. A question raised by Pallavi Thakur regarding the relevance of women seeking independence today to Deshpande then she answers:

I think any archetype should be looked at very suspiciously. All these mythological stereotypes that we have now and what people keep telling you about sita, savitri and Draupadi how do we know who these women are? They are creations made for a certain purpose. I am not saying that there is nothing real about them. They are very real. Our Mahabharata is a wonderfully real book. But the men were the main characters in these myths and the women were kind of props. They filled certain places which were important for women to fill. So if women are expected to behave like that today, it's very false because today's world is an altogether different world. Also we are individual human beings. We have come to this world with some unique qualities: The quality that I have nobody else has and the quality you have nobody else has. Then why should we try to be somebody else? To me again feminism comes to the same point that I have to explore my full potential. Every human being whether it's a man or a woman, is not just a man or a woman. Men are often
suppressed and not allowed to do something because it is unmanly
(Defining Feminism, 2001: 19).

According to me no human being should endure injustice. Why should one put up with this? These things make life more comfortable for men. To have a sita who listens to everything makes life very comfortable for you. I can admire certain qualities of sita but I don’t have to admire all her qualities. As an Indian a woman who has been brought up on these myths. I can still read sita’s story and get tears in my eyes, but that does not mean that I want to be like her. I would see sita’s story this way–I have to learn from that. I should not be like that. I will see Draupadi’s story and I say I should not be like that. When she wants to marry Arjuna and they tell her to marry the entire fine she should have said no. Of course it was not possible for her. I recognize that; but today if it is possible for me I should learn to say no. So far me these things are imposed on women. Men are also conditioned by social archetypes like men are supposed to be certain things the protectors, the manly, the mature image; they are all part of men. But women are much more conditioned because being in a subordinate position, being the dependent gender, it has been more important for them to follow the path. It is very hard for them to break away since they are economically dependant on a man. In a family, woman never had any power. So she just had to be what she was expected to be. For me this whole thing was very important because the day I got married, I realized I can not be a good daughter – in- law, a devoted wife. I will be a good wife in my own way. I will be a good mother in my own way.

Deshpande's language has often been called ‘simple’, ‘realistic’ and ‘transparent’. It neither draws attention to itself nor does it hinder the reader in any way. It subtly lends itself to all situations. Her primary stress is
upon the middle-class ethos and her language reflects this concern. She uses English the way as her own language reflects this concern. She uses English the way an average, middle-class individual educated in both the vernacular and English would use it — that is, unaffectedly, a little “incorrectly” at times, by the standards of British English. This “middle-classness” (Viswanatha, 1987: 8-14), in fact, proves to be a characteristic quality of her work. Like, for instance, the protagonists themselves who are no heroines with extraordinary qualities, but recognizable as the ‘women-next-door.’ Their lives are without adventure, punctuated and relieved by births, weddings and deaths. Their problems are those of any real life woman — a marriage that has become dull and monotonous, an unwanted pregnancy or, at the most, an extra-marital relationship.

However, as the customs and rituals of maharashtrians or kannadigas. These two communities often overlap; it is difficult for the average reader to identify the locale in which they have been placed. Deshpande does provide a few clues but so subtle as to escape the notice of a reader unfamiliar with the region.

Through her portrayal of the Indian middle-class woman’s existence in India, Deshpande not only presents a feminist insight into patriarchal values, but also prescribes a balance between tradition and modernity as a working philosophy for the contemporary woman. By tradition, she means those values of security and harmony that symbolize the Indian way of life, while modernity essentially refers to the assertion of the independent, individual self. Her protagonists, at the beginning of their quest, find that they have passively accepted their socially ordained roles. She advocates that to realize herself, the woman must be true to her own self. The sacrifice and nobility that is expected of the woman is a stereotype that only bogs
down the woman in a mire of negation and suppression. The woman needs to venture out of the familiar framework, to discover her potential as an individual and give expression to her inner space and self.

Deshpande compares her protagonists with women characters from old generation as well as with the lower classes in her novels. Through out her representations of women characters, she suggests that some of older generation women and lower class women characters. Her strong women characters are determined to better their lives. The protagonists learn from these minor characters that it is they who have to make life possible by standing up for themselves and resisting oppression. By portraying the minor characters and the protagonists together, Deshpande seems to be suggesting a reworking of the Indian idea of womanhood which both recognize the reality of Indian society and repudiates stereotypes about women. She also introduces a number of male characters in her fiction to represent the dynamics of patriarchy in the marital sphere. These men see women as made in their own image, and therefore incapable of existing as independent human beings. The protagonists’ resolve to resist such marginalization marks the beginning of a major revolution in their outlook.

Although Deshpande’s primary focus is the man-woman relationship in Indian marriages. She also concerns herself with the exploration of various human relationships within the family—for example, the relationship between mother-daughter, father-daughter, siblings etc. It is in this respect that she progresses from the particular to the universal. The protagonists’ recall of traditional percepts from the Mahabharata and the Bhagwad Gita, emphasizing larger existential questions is of a piece with this. The intrinsic aloneness of human beings (The Dark Holds No Terrors), the recognition of responsibility in choice (That Long Silence), the meaning of Dharma in
one's life (The Binding Vine) are serious metaphysical issues that subtly envelop her works take them beyond feminist concerns. Her human-centeredness makes her more than just a significant woman writer of our times.

The Indian woman finds herself as a victim of oppression at all such levels. She does not have any control over her body. Her subordination is total—at almost all stages of her life. As a daughter, she is the victim of gender bias. She is taught from early childhood to suppress her will and aspiration. Her ideals are Sita and Savitri, and she is taught to emulate them to become an 'ideal' wife. As a wife and mother, she has no identity independent. Her existence is geared towards pleasing her husband and bearing her children. In Alison M. Jaggar's words, "with the partial exception of mothers, the male culture defines women as sexual objects for male pleasure" (1983: 260). As a daughter and wife, a woman's sexuality is carefully controlled so that she may not bring dishonour to her family. It is only when she grows old that she gains respect and social status. This again is contingent upon her having borne male children or her possessing money. Often, as a result of having had no outlet for her hostility and aggression during her oppression, she turns into an oppressor of other women, especially her daughter-in-law. As a widow or as a childless woman, she is excluded in many ways from the larger cultural fabric of society. Her entire existence, thus, is shaped by her position as a person of minimal consequence to society. In the short stories, Deshpande explores the different levels of oppression and their overt and covert manifestations. As in the novels, her concern is for the woman and how she fares in our society.
The present research explores the major themes in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* deals with the theme of exploitation and objectification of woman, self-discovery, self-confidence, victimization and marginalization of woman, discriminatory treatment given to the females in underprivileged position of the girls in the family and conflict between tradition and modernity. This novel, seeks to discuss the male ego which refuses to accept a secondary position in marriage. It narrates the harrowing experience of the protagonist, Saru, who enjoys a greater economic and social status than her husband Manohar. The novelist, also makes the readers aware of society’s reaction to the superior status of the wife in a marriage. That leads the husband to develop an inferiority complex. The novel also seeks to discuss the blatant gender discrimination which is shown even by parents towards their daughters. Deshpande effectively conveys the carving by parents for a male child and the disastrous effect it can have on a sensitive young girl. Denied of parental love and victim of her husband’s frustrations, Saru undergoes an arduous journey into herself and liberates herself from guilt, shame and humiliation to emerge in full control over her life.

Shashi Deshpande’s primary focus of attention is the world of women. The struggle of women in the content of modern Indian society. In her novel *If I Die Today* The narrator Manju is quite different, from the average Indian woman who views matrimony and motherhood as the ultimate happiness in life. The novel is set in the resident quarters of a large charity hospital where there are a series of killings beginning with the murder of the terminally in patient Guru. The vast number of characters in the area, their frustrations and disappointments, provide enough material
for a gripping murder mystery. But what could have been a taunt suspense story menders aimlessly taking the readers along to an uninspiring end.

*Roots and Shadows* deals with the theme of search for identity, perpetual struggle of woman to discover herself and her helplessness. Women striving to challenge the traditional role of women, discontentment with the subordinate role of a woman. The novel highlights the agony and suffocation experienced by the protagonist Indu in a male-dominated and tradition-bound society. She finds herself alienated when she refuses to conform to the rigid code laid down by society. Marriage to the man of her choice brings only disillusionment when she finds her educated and ostensibly progressive minded husband no different from the average Indian male. The novel gains its feminist stance from Indu's persistent exploration of herself as an individual. An extra-marital affair helps her to break free from the emotional bondage of matrimony and makes her aware of herself and realize that it is possible to exercise autonomy within the parameters of marriage. The novel also offers a scope to observe meaningless rituals and customs all of which help to perpetuate the myth of male superiority.

Deshpande's next novel *Come Up and Be Dead*, manifests the suppression of woman in the male dominated society and also women's struggle to erect her identity in the society. The protagonist Kshama is the school principal and her housekeeper cousin, Devayani are spinsters. They are typical examples of women caught between the modern idea of freedom and the traditional need for a husband and home of their own. Kshama is an efficient administrator and possesses and ostensibly unruffled manner but her thoughts reveal the agitation and complexes within her. Devayani seems quite content with her role as a housekeeper but we find her musing now and then about the uselessness of her life, "But I was neither daughter nor..."
wife nor mother now. What was I then? Nothing? In a sense, it was restful to be nothing. And yet there was this feeling too ...I might as well be dead" (1983: 119). This may be Deshpande's way of showing that even a person as well read as Devayani who quotes frequently from Shakespeare and Dickens, is still the product of a culture which declares woman's experience as incomplete without marriage.

That Long Silence deals with the following themes: realization of self-hood, challenging the traditional view of the woman and new approach to feminine understanding, suppression and security (Jaya and Mohan), loss of identity, separation and exploitation of women death and realization reaction against feminine passivity. The novel is concerned with self-revelation and self estimation of women. At one place in the novel, Jaya realizes that her name is not included in the family tree, she is given to understand that she now belongs to her husband's family and not to her father's .But this is not quite true. Jaya feels that her name and existence along with those of other women in the family are fully effected from the list of family history.

The Binding Vine contains the theme of imbalance relationship between husband and wife, subordination and resultant objectification of woman, curbing of the creative urge of the woman and challenging the traditional roles assigned to woman. Urmi notices the difference in handing over of mira's property to her. When Akka hands over Mira's jewellary, she say, "They are kishore's mothers... I kept them for his wife." But when she hands over the books and diaries of Mira, she says. "Take this, its mira's She did not mention kishore at all. As if she was now directly linking we with Mira" (1993: 48). This shows that a woman looses her identity after her
marriage. Thus a loss of identity is one of the major themes of *The Binding Vine*.

In this novel man connects love with sex. While woman connects with feeling. Man takes woman as a luxury-object to play with without caring for her consent. This is a kind of brutality which creates psychological fears in the mind of the woman towards this act. The same kind of alienation was experienced by Maya in *Cry, the Peacock* (Anita Desai). Thus there is the theme of imbalance relationship between husband and wife.

*A Matter of Time* deals with the theme of man-woman relationship, struggle for existence. This novel describes the complex relationship within the large family, encompassing three generation of men and women. It is about eighteen year old-Arus-struggling to understand her father’s desertion and her mothers ‘indifference’ and in the course of a few turbulent months making entirely unexpected relationships that are destined to change the course of her life. We encounter the theme of relationship that exists between man and woman. Thus Deshpande’s novels explores experience of oppression of Indian woman in the domestic set-up, experiences which are rooted in,

> The presumption that a woman is an inferior being, of carrying the burden of being an unwanted female child, of having to battle and ingrained, deeply entrenched patriarchal system all of which give rise to problems specific to their sex (Deshpande Demythifying Womanhood, 1995: 08).

It is among the middle classes that the stereotypical values attached to social roles are most studiedly inculcated in the girl child. The causes of conflict and oppression of the woman originate within the family. Interpersonal
relationships are fraught with friction at the emotional intellectual and sexual levels. What happens in Deshpande's fiction is. The marital relationship has its share of overt and covert manifestations of oppression. Both men and women are socialized into accepting the male's superiority. Strange as it may seem, the day-to-day strife on the domestic front is the most intangible part of the Indian woman's existence and contributes in good measure to her suffering.
WORKS CITED

Asnani, Shyam M. Critical Response to Indian Fictions. mittal, pub. Delhi: 1985


