ABSTRACT

The present research is a study of the search for ‘self’ of female protagonists in the select novels of two eminent post-colonial woman novelists. The novels chosen for this study are *Socialite Evenings* and *Second Thoughts* by Shobha De and *Difficult Daughters* and *A Married Woman* by Manju Kapur. Since both the novelists have pondered upon issues related to women’s position in a patriarchal society, the literary texts have been analyzed from a feminist perspective focusing upon the various social, cultural, religious, political and familial forces that have been in practice for centuries to subvert numerous aspirations of a woman who tries to find a place of her own in a male world. The study is an endeavor to trace the revolutionary transformation and attitudinal shift in women who have in their desire for emancipation of ‘self’ tried to break free from the fetters of tradition and domesticity. The research has also taken into its fold a comparative study of the protagonists’ of De and Kapur. Though they belong to different social milieu, they are all victims of identity crisis. The study thus attempts to understand the agony and sufferings, the frustrations and disappointments, the successes and failures of the female protagonists’ of De and Kapur in their journey towards self-discovery.

The thesis is divided into five chapters and the chapterization is as follows:

Chapter-I

The first chapter titled ‘Introduction’ is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the methodology adopted for this research. It broadly states the aim of the study and lays down its specific objectives. It focuses on the rationale and significance of the study and comments upon its scope and limitations. It also draws out a brief biographical sketch of the two novelists chosen for the study and sifts through the themes dealt by them in their works. This section also states the hypothesis and draws out a chapter-wise plan of the research. Since the present study is carried out in the backdrop of feministic ideals, the second section of this chapter is devoted to Theoretical Framework.
It glimpses through the secondary status of women in society which has been responsible for the feminist movement. It also comments on the concept of feminism, its origin and takes a look at the major feminist voices, the world over. The study also takes a peek into feminism in India so as to understand the predicament of women and their psyche as presented in the novels by the two Indian novelists selected for this study.

Chapter-II

The title of this chapter is ‘Journey of Women Novelists in India’. It begins with the historical perspective of the ‘novel’ as a literary genre in India and presents a study of the women novelists in a chronological order. It also reflects upon the themes in the novels of some of the major women novelists and focuses on the portrayal of women in their writings.

Chapter-III

This chapter is devoted to a detailed study of the two selected novels by Shobha De. It traces the journey of the female protagonists in their search for ‘self’. It begins with a study of the themes and comments on the inter-personal relationships between the different male and female characters as observed from a reading of the novels. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the writer’s portrayal of ‘self’ of her women protagonists in the novels selected for the study.

Chapter-IV

Chapter-IV undertakes an exhaustive study of the two selected novels by Manju Kapur. It follows a pattern similar to the third chapter where it discusses the various impediments that come in the way of the quest for identity of the female protagonists. It throws light on the persona and psyche of men and women who belong to different generations and analyses the gradual transition in their outlook towards social and familial life. This chapter, like the preceding
one, concludes on a note on portrayal of ‘self’ of the female protagonists in the novels under this study.

**Chapter-V**

This is the concluding chapter of the research. It is divided into two sections. The first section deals with a comparative analysis of the search for ‘self’ of female protagonists of De and Kapur from a detailed reading of the novels selected for the study. Beginning with a comparative analysis of its themes, the chapter critically examines various factors responsible for the subservient status and the bruised psyche of its protagonists. It comments on the patriarchal institutions of family and marriage as the bedrock of women subjugation. The section also includes a discussion on the language and style used by the two novelists and comments on their treatment of the Indian ethos. The second part of this chapter records the major findings of the study that emerge out of a comparison of the writings of De and Kapur. The chapter also cites the advantages of a study like this which will help students to have greater insights into the predicament and problems of women hailing from diverse socio-cultural background. It also suggests different dimensions from which scholars can analyze the works of Shobha De and Manju Kapur.