CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
Indian English fiction has contributed to the common pool of world writings of all the branches of creative literature the novel is comparatively more popular these days all over the world. Indo-Anglican literature was the term used in 1833 in a book published in Calcutta bore the little "Indo Anglican Literature" which contained 'specimen compositions from native students'. As a distinctive body of writing, Indian English Fiction undoubtedly exists at least a century and a half. The earliest known novel in English has been written in India in 1835. The beginning of literary activity of English Fiction in India may be found in Bengal. Toru Dutt wrote many poems and French novels in her teens. The first Indian novel to be published in English was 'Raj Mohan's Wife' in 1864. There were many other authors like Ramesh Chandra Dutt, S.K. Ghosh, S. B. Benerjee and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who contributed to the literary renaissance in India during the last decade of nineteenth century. Their novels gave at once a standing and status to Indian novel. Their novels were popular for depicting the contemporary problems. As the French literary historian, M. Taine said about literature that it is a mirror of all major divisions of human kind and their environment and social surrounding which delineates every brief portion of time:

Literature is the creation of three factors: the race, the milieu, the movement. This need not be accepted as a total truth, for the individual too has his own part to play in literary action. But the sociological theory has its uses. As regards Indo-Anglican literature, the race is mixed Indian race, a resultant of invasions, conquests, and occupations extending over a period of four or five thousand years; the 'milieu' the variegated Indian subcontinent, comprising extremes of every kind heir
to own; and the 'moment', the meeting of the West of India.

(Iyengar, Indian Writing in English, P.22.)

It is glorifying to note that Indian English novel has also been flourishing with vigour and vitality both in quality and quantity since independence. It is not too old. The flowering of it in real sense was to commence only in the nineteenth twenties and the Thirties. By now this novelists make up a formidable body of fiction. In addition to the common themes like cross-cultural relations, the national movements for freedom, the partition of India and the holocaust that followed independence, the Indian English novelists have also been preoccupied with the delineation of poverty, hunger, widespread social evils and resultant tensions, exploration of the hybrid culture of the middle-class educated-Indian youth, the countless dislocations and conflicts in a tradition-ridden society under the impact of an incident, half-hearted industrialization. When we have a cursory glance at the Indian English novel written upto 1960s, we find that it reveals that it is mainly concerned with large public issues and national and social problems of the individuals. In contrast, the novel of the seventies and eighties has turned introspective and the individual's quest for personal meaning in life has become a theme of interest for most of the writers.

The decade of 1930s was indeed a blooming period for the Indian English novel. It saw the appearance of the first novels by the big three: Anand’s Untouchable (1935), Narayan’s Swami and Friends (1935) and Raja Rao’s Kanthapura (1938). In them can be discerned a marked improvement of their predecessors in form, technique, art of character delineation and handling of themes. Anand modeled his novels on the contemporary European and American novelists, borrowing the stream of consciousness technique from Joyce and Lawrence, psychological analysis and social realism from Zola, Dickens, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.
Narayan sought to deal almost exclusively with the lower middleclass families of southern India with gentle, sympathetic irony in a tragic–comic mode, whereas Raja Rao adopted for the Puranic Harikatha traditions of story–telling and made an old village granny unfold the narrative in autobiographical mode. This mode of narration, as we now realize, has been effectively useful in analysing a situation and unravelling the multifaceted personality of character. These writers brought in new themes, new techniques, new style and new approach to the form of the novel. On the measure of their achievement we may well cite here the opinion of William Walsh:

It was in 1930s that the Indians began what has now turned out to be their vary substantial contribution to the novel in English and one peculiarly suited to their talents.

(Bellippa, “Rohington Misty a Fine Balance”, P.20-30)

Ever since the debut of the big three during the 1930, novel as a genre has continued to dominate the literary scene by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. In the beginning novelist represents the historical background in the novel. But later, these novelists have sought to explore and interpret India significantly in its various aspects- social, economic, cultural, Political and the like. The Second World War, the independence and partition of the country were strong historical forces that gave further impetus to these writers. There was enough raw material in the society torn by communal frenzy, political manoeuvrings, social disparities and corruption in bureaucracy for the thematic treatment by the novelists of post – independence generation and to stir the imagination of the countrymen to a new awakening. And this could best be done through the medium of novel. So the full development of the Indian novel after
independence may be divided into three large stages: Historical romance, Social or political realism and Psychological novels.

In the beginning, the historical romance was obviously associated with awakening of Indian nationalism. In Bengali, Bhudebchandra Mukharjee wrote *Anguriya Binimoy* (1857) Bankimchandra Chatterjee also wrote one historical novel, *Raj Singha* (1881). During the British period nationalist feeling came to the foreform of Indian life in the twenties or thirties. The concern for one’s motherland was very much in evidence among the people. In the second phase, the Indian novels move from Venkatrami's *Murugan the Tiller* and *Kandan and Patriot*, to MulkRaj Anand’s *Passionate Progressivism* and the emotional zeal for Gandhian ideal in Raja Rao’s early work. Indo-Anglican novel is firmly rooted in the social and cultural ethos of India. But they also described the theme, which have more or less validity all over the country. Indian themes are not many in number but religion variation is the cause that the novelists have chosen that subject which is equally similar to all Indians. For example, the theme of social change: the disintegration of the old hierarchal and agrarian society or the breakdown of the large joint family. This is the change that is taken place all over the country and whether Attia Hossain in *Sunlight on a Broken Column* writes about a Muslim Household in Lucknow or MulkRaj writes about a peasant family in Punjab *The Sword and the Sickle*. The situations of these novels are real to all Indians.

Indian English Fiction also acquires a consistent, predictable and shapely form with the ascent Big three writers. Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan were whole time writer but Raja Rao has been writing fiction for the last three decades. They describe historical and social life of India in their novels. Prof. Iyenger has remarked about their talent to Indian fiction:
of the Indo - Anglican novelists, only Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan have shown anything like stamina and stern consistency of purpose. There has been no death of talent…… but MulkRaj Anand and R. K. Narayan have manage….to hold on to the chosen course, and each one has now to his credit a corpus of creative fiction of sufficient buik and quality to merit serious study.

(Iyengar, Indian writing in English, P. 33.)

It is true that the corpus of Raja Rao’s fiction is not large as MulkRaj Anand’s and R. K. Narayan’s. But in fictional excellences and singularity of vision he is as significant as his contemporaries. His Kanthapura, The Serpant of the Rope and The Cat and Shakespear are deeply historical and philosophical. Among the Indian English writers of the second generation the genius of Bhavani Bhattacharya falls in between Anand and Narayan. His sensibility is realistic and an admixture of socialism and humanism. He also won Sahitya Academy award in 1967 for Shadow from Ladakh. His novels So Many Hungers, Shadow from Ladakh , Music for Mohini, He Who Rides a Tiger, A Goddess Named have impressive achievement. Manohar Malgonkar’s milieu is war, patriotism and historical realism.

Social or political realism is another preoccupation of the Indian novelists of post - independence period. In India, there is different social-cultural life. So there prevails the problem of caste, creed, community and religion. People of that time also have blind faith in wisdom of Guru who also shape the action and conduct of many people in every part of the country.

Some Indian novels also give place to caste system. Mulkraj
Anand's *Untouchable* and Bhabani Bhattacharya's, *He Who Rides a Tiger* have caste as the basis of their story. They seem to challenge the prevailing caste-system in India. Another eminent novelist who has dealt with cast-system is Manohar Malgonkar. There are certain novelists who usually write about particular community or region. For instance, Kushwant Singh writes mainly about the Sikhs and R.K Narayan about particular region of Malgudi. It may also be mentioned that most of the Indian novelists like Santha Rama Rao, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Ahmed Ali, Nayantara Sahagal, Attia Hussain etc. take their main characters and themes from where they live.

The struggle for independence became one such unifying force in the two decades preceding the actual achievement of political freedom and no novelist living in or dealing with this period could avoid writing about it. Mulkraj Anand's *Untouchable and Coolie* were written about social changes. R. K. Narayan's *Waiting for Mahatma* also deals with national feelings.

After Independence the Indian society faces an unavoidable conflict between tradition and modernity resulting many social familial and even individual problems which we observe in the novels of that period. These novels have a rural background for the launching of their stories but they progress from village to city and keep shifting between the countryside and the urban habitants.

Now-a-days there are many Indian writers who are attempting to change age-old myths related to the man-woman relationship and some have succeeded in their attempts. In twentieth century, feminist movement is an analysis of women's subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change it. Though Indian English novel remained male-dominated for
quite sometime, as all the major novelists in the pre-independence period including the three greats, came from the male section of the society, yet in the post-independence period there appeared on the horizon of Indian English novels a number of women writers. These female novelists have made a significant contribution in the field of fiction and definitely enriched it a great deal. They include Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Bharti Mukherji, Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Ruth Pawar Jhabvala, Gita Mehta, Kusum Ansal and Arundhati Roy.

The main theme of post-independence Indian fiction has been focused on contemporary problems and it also gives birth to psychological novels. As we know that western society is based on a totally different conception of man-woman relationship but in Indian novels marital bliss and romantic love are frequent. In some recent Indo-English novels one notices a sense of nostalgia in the joint family. The nostalgia does not always affect to sentimentality but sometime of human beings in order to seek their own identities consciously try to break away from the kind of life they are nostalgic for. When people become independent in India, they also have quest for selfhood. In this group we can include Mulkray Anand's, *The Village*, Kamal Markandaya's, *Some Inner Fury*, and *Two Virgins* and Anita Desai's *Cry and the Peacock* etc. At that time Indian novelists dwells upon the conflict between duty to the family and personal fulfillment. So the problem of adjustment in the husband’s home has been the most widely treated theme in the novels written by Indian women novelists. Some of these women writers seem to be suggesting that wives should be given more right and not treated as inferior to their husbands, while other seem to be suggesting that wives should have a more positive outlook than the one they have and should relinquish the negative one.

Among the Indian - English writers of the next generation, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala is one of the loveliest and most urban fiction writers. She
has published six novels. She has different background so her outlook is also urban in India. Her fiction delights in clashes between traditional codes of conduct and modern aspirations. Most of her heroines belong to western culture and married with Indian. But due to different cultural and values, they find difficulty in the adjustment of their married life. In her novels Jhabvala speaks about the problem of female characters. Being sentimental, she does not falsify life rather idealized it.

Kamala Markandaya is the most outstanding figure in Indian English fiction among female writers. She treats the problems, which Indian immigrants are facing in the western countries. Her novels *Nectar in Sieve, A Silence of Desire, Possession, A Handful Rice*, and *The Coffin Dams* describe the struggle of life in modern city. Her Nectar in Sieve is the most widely read. It has been compared with Pearl Buck's The Good Earth though it bears striking resemblance to S. K Venkataramani's *Murugan the Tiller*. Markandaya writes about Fear, hunger and despair which exists among the life of peasants. Prof. Iyengar aptly remarks:

> Where Venkataramani is political and masculine. Markandaya is suggestive and feminine. If her writing is less rich in imagery, it has more ease and partakes more of the life's fitful fever.

*(Iyengar, Indian Writing in English, P.349.)*

Anita Desai is another female writer in Indian English fiction who has different outlook in her eight novels. Her two novels *Cry the Peacock* and *Voices in the City*, keep her in the front rank of contemporary novelists. whereas in Jhabvala's works social background is more important than the characters; in Markandaya's the stress is as much on the principal character as on the diverse backgrounds just as economic, political, cultural, but Anita Desai's novels deal with inner sensibility of their characters.
In each of Desai's novels, the main thrust is on the life of the individual, on myriad inner impressions passing fancies and fleeting thoughts, together with her razor-like sharp awareness of the futility of existence. Her fictional milieu is mostly overcasted by shadows, mist and fog, a world-half concealed and half revealed, part real and part fictitious. She can explore tiny section of this territory. For her:

It is depth which is interesting, delving deeper and deeper in a character, a situation, or a scene rather than going round about it.

*(Desai, Interview with Jasbir Jain P.5.)*

Thus the most prominent feature of Desai's fictional art is the delineation of female character as living in secluded closed, sequestered limbo of private sufferings. They are portrayed as engrossed with the present, look backward in time and visualize future as well.

Nayantara Sehgal has also established herself as the most remarkable woman writer at work in India to-day. She has been widely acclaimed for her three autobiographicals - *From Fear Set Free, Prison and Chocolate Cake*, and *A Time to Be Happy*. Her latest novel, *Storm in Chandigarh* adds a new dimension to her literary excellence. She has established herself as a leading example of India's emerging writer-possessed equally of a cool analytical brain and broad human sympathies.

Bharti Mukherjee too takes up for treatment of the problem of adjustment that Indians living in the west have to face. Her characters feel alien there. In the novels of Gita Mehta the East West encounter takes place in a different form. Any study of women writing in English remains incomplete without Shobha De. In her novels it is the woman who occupies the central place. Being a journalist, she expands her novels to the wide
range of experience. As a feminist Shobha De has worked for the complete emancipation of woman but she is feminist of another kind, one who projects the ideas of liberating woman through self-actualization and the acceptance. She believes in extra-marital affairs if anyone does not get satisfaction in her married life. Thus, to some extent we find that Shobha De's woman characters suffer due to lack of experience, maturity and the neglect and non-co-operative attitude of their husbands. But through their self-actualization they recognize themselves better as an independent individual. The development of her woman characters as realised person brings the yearning for a life of fulfillment, which comes after self-actualisation. In the process of development, they first appear in an inhibited form and later on they become fully aware of their own blooming, though slightly bruised, self.

Thus, there is an upsurge of woman writers in the field of Indian English fiction and they appeal to the variety of readers with varied interest. These are the prominent women writers who sow the seeds of lucrative fiction. In the words of eminent poet, Ravindra Nath Tagore, women have important place in society:

Woman is the builder and molder of Nation's density-
Though delicate and soft as a lily, she has a heart,
stronger than of man-she is the supreme inspiration for
man's onward march, an embodiment of love, pity and
compassion.

(\textit{Neeta, Vedic Path}, P.157.)

So, in recent time women writers have brought into lime-light who
have considerable worth and stature. It should not be mistaken that any
Indian writer writes in English to cater to the westerner's demand for
information about the Indian scene, about Indian thought or view of life,
but he/she does it to pour out his/her soul, vision insight into reality, only
to share it with man. Even more than men, women writers gifted with fine
talents have made Indian English literature a matter of pride to us and a
source of inspiration and admiration to the foreigners. The growing interest
in the field of Indian English fiction is a sure sign of the progress in Indian
English literature.

No writer produces his/her work in a vacuum; he/she is deeply
affected by historical and social milieu. Shashi Deshpande is no exception.
She has created her characters through the study of literature written in
both regional languages and English. Similarly, political condition of the
country has contributed to the creation of her characters. So it would be
relevant to consider the political changes that influenced women’s life and
also the female characters that Shashi Deshpande observed in literature.

During the pre-independence period, women have no right and
freedom to do anything in society. But in the post-independence period,
education became available to the masses so it paved the path to women’s
liberation. Freedom also shaped the awareness in women about their
individuality. Although the term Indian woman is very convenient to use, it
is quite ambiguous also. In India the women’s struggle can not be
separated from other system of domination and exploitation, such as class
or caste etc. On the whole Indian Feminism is evolutionary in nature.
Today Indian females are quite aware regarding their self-hood due to the
spread of education but they are inhibited in their social and cultural roots
as well, which creates problems in their life.

When the nationalist struggle ended, a new task of rebuilding the
nation had to be taken up. It was during forties and fifties that Indian myths
history, religions and national traditions were re-interpreted to arrive at an
understanding of our own country.

The changes during this decade also influenced the women writers.
They played a significant role in shaping of India through their works.
Thus the seeds of women’s liberation were sown. Jawaharlal Nehru, the
first prime minister of India, promised social justice and equality to the nation. The Hindu Code Bill sought to create a uniform law ensuring women same rights to property and succession treating them as equal to men in relation to marriage and divorce. Owing to these political changes in the national policy about women in later years women's writings gradually began to reflect these nationalist ideologies. Through the liberal education, the western influence forced new values and norms of life upon women. They came out from domestic surroundings and crude customs of society. They became conscious about their self-identity. Thus the writers of the contemporary world came out rapidly and they presented the realities of the life of women. The earlier writers presented the traditional Seeta image, an object of pity, but later on as time changes, the realistic image of women, their sense of frustration and alienation began to appear.

As we have observed Indian Fiction in English has been enriched by several highly talented women novelists including Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sehgal, Attia Hosain, Santha Rama Rau etc. They have written of Indian women, their conflicts and predicaments against the background of contemporary India. They also have analysed the social-cultural modes and values of society. Their chief contribution consists of their exploring the moral and psychic dilemmas and their efforts to cope with challenges and achieve a new harmony of relationship with themselves and their surroundings.

Shashi Deshpande is undoubtedly as outstanding Indian English novelist. She was born in 1938 in Dharwad, in Karnataka, India. She is the daughter of the renowned Kannada writer and Sanskrit scholar Adya Rangachar, better known as Sriranga. He was a cerebral man who wrote plays of ideas and known as Bernard Shaw of Kannada theatre. Shashi Deshpande wrote nine novels, four volumes of short stories and four children's books. She graduated in economics from Elhpinstone College, Bombay and in law from the government law college, Bangalore. Much
later, she took a post-graduate degree in English from the Maysore University. She married to Dr. Deshpande, a Neuro-pathologist in 1962 and the initial years of her marriage were largely given over to bringing up her two sons. Recounting the influence in her life, Shashi Deshpande says:

"There are three things in my early 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."

*(Shashi Deshpande, "Of Concerns of Anxieties", P.5.)*

Shashi Deshpande is a widely read person. She has never identifies herself with any particular group of writers, whether of India or abroad. Just like writers Somer Set Maugham, Jane Austen, Dickens and Tolstoy Doris Lessing she has also written regularly Simon de Beauvoir and Germaine Greer stimulated her writings at the same time. Deshpande told her interviewer: "when I read them, they stimulated me."

Shashi Deshpande approaches contemporary Indian Novelist with an open mind. She considers Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* and Attia Hosain's *Sunlight* on a brown column. But she dose not like Desai's vision of India because Desai's novels are lacking in the "density in human relationship". She does not feel a kinship with Indian English writers of today. She calls Rushdie a path breaker. According to her, "His Midnight's Children is original, brilliant, bizarre, at times incomprehensible which changed every thing for Indians writing in English." (Times of India, 11th August, 1996 P.10)

On the contrary, Deshpande would approved the novel like Amitav Gosh's. The *Shadow Lines*. She rates it as a most skillful weaving of
national history and private lives. She also likes Anita Desai’s books.

Notwithstanding her readings and familiarity with works both Victorian or modern, Shashi Deshpande is essentially a self-taught writer. She began her writing career rather late. In an interview to Vanamala Viswanath Shashi Deshpande Says:

My Husband was a commonwealth scholar and we went to England. We were there for a year. I thought it would be a pity if I forgot all our experience there. So I started writing them down and gave them to my father. He gave them to 'Decan Herald' which published them promptly. So it become very accidentally. Then I was looking for 'The Onlooker' when one of the sub-editor said to me "why don't you write a story? So I wrote one for a first story I thought It was very good a somewhat Maughamish kind of story. And then I wrote on and on as though I was crazed. There was no thinking or worrying about the theme, technique or publisher I simply wrote.

*(Shashi Deshpande, Literature Alive P.9.)*

Not only the novels but she has also written some short stories. Her first collection of short stories, published in 1978 and it was called *The Legacy*. Her other collections of short stories are: *It Was Dark, The Miracle, It was The Nightingale and The Intrusion* and other stories. In between, Shashi Deshpande also tried her hand at detective writing and wrote two detective serials, which were subsequently expanded and published as regular novels. *Come up and Be Dead* and *If I Die Today*.

Shashi Deshpande has written nine novels - *The Dark Holds No*

Shashi Despande's novel have narrow range like Jane Austen's novel’s. They are more or less a fictionalization of personal experiences. Most of the novels present a typical, middle-class house -wife's life. Despande’s main concern is the urge to fine one self. But the predicament of women - specially those who are educated and belong to the middle class has been mostly dealt with. She also portrays parent child relationship, marriage and sex and their exploitation and disillusionment which has been call as feminism in her novels. In an interview Geetha Gangadharah asked whether she would like to call herself a feminist she replied:

Yes, I would. I am a feminist in the sense that, I think, we need to have a world which we should recognized as place for all of us human beings. There is no superior or inferior, we are two halves of one species. I fully agreed with Simone de Behavior that "that fact that we are human is much more important than our being men and Women.” I think that’s my idea of feminism.

(Geeta Gangadharan, Interview "Denying the Otherness", P.2.)

Roots and Shadow in first full length novel written by Shashi Deshpande. Though it was published after The Dark Holds No Terrors, her second novel. This novel reveals the problem and agony of the
protagonist Indu, who is educated middle-class journalist but suffered by male-dominated and tradition bound society. To escape the tyranny of her grand mother, she goes away for higher education and later marries out of her caste. Her husband was not different from the average Indian male. The novel has glimpse of feminisms from Indu's persistent exploration of her self as an individual. An extra-marital affair help her to break free from emotional bondage to matrimony and makes her aware of herself. In Roots Shadow, meaningless custom and rituals are also denied which help to perpetuate the myth of male superiority.

Deshpande's second novel, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, represents the male ego, which refuses to accept a secondary position in marriage. Saru, the medical professional, is quite happy in her married life with Manohar and two children; but one day she finds that her married life has been destroyed. She is victim of her husband's frustration, which manifests itself in the form sexual sadism. This novel seeks to discuss the society's reaction to the superior status of the wife in a marriage. Deshpande also discusses the blatant gender discrimination which is shown by parents towards their daughter. Deshpande shows the effect of society that they like male child more than the female child. In this novel, Saru was denied by parental love and was victim of her husband's frustration. Later she liberates herself from guilt, shame and humiliation and to emerge in full control over her life.

Deshpande's third novel, *That Long Silence*, brought her into limelight. It also won Sathiya Akadmi Award. Jaya protagonist of this novel is married to Mohan. One day she is shakeout of her small world when her husband is accused of corruption. He has to move to Dadar flat to make herself inconspicuous. The crises of Jaya's life filled her with self-doubts and fears. In her anxiety, Jaya realises that she dose not do Justice to her talents as a writer.
But her constant fear of displeasing her husband not only make her give up writing but also discourage her. Jaya being a young educated modern woman is dwelling in tradition. She also offers Glimpse of educated housewife who is suppressed under the weight of male dominance. But in the end, she decides to be assertive and break the long silence between her self and her husband.

In her fourth novel, *The Binding Vine*, Deshpande describes the personal tragedy of the protagonist Urmi. When the novel opens, Urmi has lost her child. Her sister-in-law and her mother make several unsuccessful attempts to remove her pain, one day she meets, Shakutai, a lower class woman whose daughter has been raped. In the novel, Deshpande makes a bold attempt to portray the agony of wife who is victim of marital rape. This theme perhaps has not been discussed before by any other writer in Indian English. Urmi also discovers her mother-in-law’s stealthily written poem. The grief of Kalpana and Mira brings Urmi out of her shell. The novelist gives the plight of women raped after marriage and they would never dare to reveal this to any body. They would rather stifle their voice of protest for the sake of social and moral security. In his novel, Deshpande discusses hat married women are also victim of some violence or deprivation.

In her novel, *A Matter of Time*, Deshpande liberates herself from woman’s problems and enters into the metaphysical world of philosophy. Sumi is an educated middle – class house wife, living with her professor husband and three daughters, until Gopal suddenly decides to walkout of her although his reasons for doing so are highly philosophical. Sumi does not want Gopal to come to her against his wishes. She evolves her own identity through a job and creative writing. This novel shows the story of three generation. Sumi’s story is parallel by that of her mother who has never been forgiven by her husband for being responsible for the loss of
their son. But in this novel, the greater emphasis has been laid on Gopal, the perpetrator of this tragedy. It is Deshpande's single novel in which central figure is male.

Small Remedies is Deshpande's latest novel. This novel reveals a search for immortal identity. It is the most confident assertion of her strength as a novelist. In Small Remedies, the story is narrated by Madhu whose Son has been killed in communal violence. She wrote biography of Savitribai Indorekar, the ageing respecting member of Hindustani Music who denies marriage and home to pursue her genius. She later married with Muslim accompanists Gulam Saab. Madhu was brought up by Leela a liberated social worker who worked at her life for the workers in a Bombay factory, in this novel, the story of Madhuv, Savitribai and Leela run parallel to each other. This novel reflects the changing times, traditions and values in which liberation seem to be becoming stronger. Despande says that moments of love and wrath are the small remedies of life.

Thus, Shashi Deshpande’s novels contain the material of feminist thought – myriad roles of women as mother/wife/daughter. She also expresses identity crisis and woman’s sexuality. She considers herself a feminist and says:

I now have no doubts at all in saying that I am feminist. I have my own life, I mean. But not consciously, as a novelist. I must also say that my feminism has come to me very slowly, very gradually, and mainly out of my own thinking and experiences and feelings. I started writing first and only than discovered my feminism. And it was much later than I actually read books about it.

(Holmstrom, Interview, Shashi Deshpande Talk to Halmstrom, P.26.)