unsuccessful. Dancing with Jit on a Saturday night she catches her breath with fear at the great pressures of Calcutta’s night life. Later, when she perceives the impact of her presence on Dharma’s painting, “She felt afraid now, longed to struggle away from any responsibility”(VC208).

Amla loves independence and wants to be individualistic. She is distressed by the joint family system prevailing in the Indian society and the marriage in such a family because; the freedom of a woman is completely lost.

“She does not want to be imprisoned by such an ensnaring social institution. She wants something greater than pleasure alone to the security of marriage alone. Something rarer, more responsible...(VC 145)

Her profession, an amalgamation of commerce and art, defeats the very sense of creativity and beauty. As the juxtaposition of the aestheticism and materialism negates communication at the deeper planes of consciousness, Amla displays her aesthetic and bend of mind by turning from commercial art to pure art.

Amla displays the aspects of a mother in her interaction with Monisha, Nirode and Dharma. Her compassionate understanding of a situation, a warm spontaneity for others problems vouch safe the existence of a mother archetype in her. Her maternal concern for Monisha is obvious as she advises her to move not of her claustrophobic world. she does arrange
for her an opportunity to visit their aunt’s house. But Monisha’s silence, withdrawal and inability to combat the realities mystify and exasperate Amla.

The disgust that grows and swells inside Monisha grips her whole being to such a degree that Amla’s efforts to enfold her in a motherly embrace seem futile. With an intention to help and protect her from the troubles of her in laws, Amla visit Monisha’s place. But the women of house ever allow Amla to have a dialogue or any communication with Monisha. Further, Nirode’s exhausted and wasted appearance and his estrangement from the mother perturb and worry her. Her efforts to correct Nirode’s miscalculations about their mother signals amla’s concern to restore that lost family order.

Amla is shocked to see her brother Nirode and her sister Monisha who have become victims of the ruthless society. She is disillusioned to see the depressed and corroded psyche of her sister and brother. She perceives

“that this monster city that lived no normal, healthy, red blooded life but one that was subterranean, under lit, stealthy and odorous of mortality had captured and enhanced or disenchanted both her sister and brother” (VC 150).

Her futile efforts at evoking response from both Monisha and Nirode coupled with her unimpressive, routine, pedestrian professional activity drive her to feel lonely and helpless in Calcutta.
Monisha being entrapped in her own family cannot extend any concrete and purposeful support to Nirode. Both Monisha and Nirode, pass through the dreary phase of waste and senselessness simultaneously. In such a situation, Amla reaches out to help Nirode though they lack a harmonious relationship. In fact, what Nirode needed was a practical and pragmatic woman, who could lead him by the hand to the world of external manifestation. Such kind of manifestation is possible only through Amla who tries to stir and steer the misguided and depraved Nirode to the soils, concrete dimensions of life. She wants him to embrace life in its natural colours-its murkiness notwithstanding.

Amla’s career consciousness and a strong urge to establish her independently also signify her Amazonian traits. After passing her art course at Bombay, she strives for objective achievements in life. Full of excitement, curiosity and aspirations, she enters Calcutta and yearns to accomplish herself as a commercial artist. Her preference for Calcutta than Kalimpong, after her studies indicates her longing to pave a way for herself. Her education infused in her the spirit of enthusiasm and she longs to enjoy her, “Job and independence” (VC 142).

Amla’s dynamism and adaptability make her comfortable in every situation. She suits herself to the situation than Monisha, even though she encounters troubles and absurdities like that of Monisha. Amla could read and diagnose the chaotic turmoil in Monisha’s life and she sincerely wished to be a means of agent to uplift her from the darkening gloom of her senseless existence. She reaches out to both Monisha and Nirode despite the fact they refrained from contact and relation and does not worry over
“His neglect of her; she was able to persuade herself that he was engrossed in his new enterprise.....” (VC 158)

Amla attempts to exercise three-dimensional influence upon Nirode. She makes an effort to apprise him of the external reality, tries to remove his illusory perception of relationship and endeavour to piece his sequestered psyche. This shows how Amla moves as an integrated and individuated person throughout her life situations. She would have passed out of the novel as well knit and a complete character ironically of her life. Her parents, brothers and sister have not filled up the empty spaces of her life. Amla is deeply attached to her sister Monisha and brother Nirode. She feels humiliated on seeing the dejected and frustrated life of Monisha and Nirode. So, she cannot convey her feelings to them.

This makes her to seek a loving companion to soothe her disturbed feelings. As love is not forthcoming from within her family, Amla turns to other in her need for love. She looks outwards in order to make friends, she need touch, contact and living people around her, not mere shadows or ghosts and so this young independent and spirited Amla falls prey to her passions and she becomes emotionally attached to Dharma, a married man.

Amla seeks authenticity in Dharma’s art and creativity and their relation seems to expand when the model gets seriously involved with the painter. As “ease and pleasure swelled their conversations, friendship entered…” (VC 204) and she feels assured and relaxed. In Dharma’s studio, her ideas appear to be translated into a means and form, naturally therefore, she becomes
“another Amla, a flowering Amla, translucent with joy and overflowing with a sense of love and reward” (VC 210).

Dharma’s paintings reveal the hallucinatory quality which exerts a disturbing influence on her mind.

Amla is caught between the reality and imagination present and future and as such the tangled boughs in her consciousness melt and disintegrate her into pieces. She longs her relationship with him to be

“quite different, something normal…. gentle, not complex and disturbing and unreal…(VC 208).

The relationship is marked by a mystique, fascinating and irresistible. Dharma’s painting affects her tremendously charms her irretrievably. She is swallowed gradually into the interior volcano of understanding and helplessly wriggles to breathe her own innocence and purity of emotions.

But when Amla hears about Dharma’s cruelty to his daughter she loses some of her respect for him. She is disappointed by Dharma’s self centered and cynical existence. Bidding farewell to Dharma’s world that brought a split in her integrated being, Amla retreats to the participatory of the family. She not only sheds the irrational anxieties which tried to control the
outcropping of her unconscious, but she also uses these experiences as a platform to take off to the renewed and transfigured zones of consciousness.

The city with its antecedent further accentuates this darkness and nightmarish gloom. Its disgust, revulsion and horror assail the dreaming Amla. Her carefully assimilated sanity and composure seem to crack and give way under its agitating environs:

“Lassitude overcame her like a fever weight against her temples, making her rest her elbows on the table and her head droop over unfinished work” (VC 174).

The monster city with its meanness and vulgarity had already captured and disenchanted Monisha. Again it wields its terrible influence upon Amla and disenchanted Monisha, hollowness and utter disgust. She tells Nirode: “This city, this city of yours it conspired against all who wish to enjoy it…” (VC 153). Amla has witnessed the city and its incomplete life choking Monisha to death. Bothe Amla’s education and career have equipped her with energy adequate to steer through agonizing situations.

Amla’s is fascinated by the pleasure of Calcutta life but is nauseated by its rottenness. The city has lost its beauty and freshness. She feels helpless in Calcutta but does not seek and solution as her sister Monish does though Monisha and Amla shares all common characters. Amla is little different from Monisha. Unlike her, she is portrayed as a rebellious young woman, eager to master life and triumph over every obstacle. Monisha is highly imaginative whereas
Amla is realistic. As a modern young woman, Amla knows pretty well that it is quite necessary to be realistic in this fact paced world. She loves independence and seeks a job which satisfies he will. Further, she takes part in social entertainments.

Amla is also caught in the mire of a mindless society. Even though she is young, individualistic and strong willed, she is not able to overcome the devilish influence of the society. She is disappointed and disillusioned, but at last she partly regains her will power after realizing the sordid reality at the sordid reality at the death of her sister Monisha. The agony in Amla’s mind springs from her inability to flow with the general current of society. She uncompromisingly takes a strong stance and refuses to accept the cruel dictated of society to which average commonality submit themselves uncomplainingly.

Amla aspires to escape from the boredom and insecurity of Calcutta by attending cocktail party dinners and dances. But this flamboyant life style fails to satisfy her quest for values as she is basically an introvert. Her next attempt to escape the environmental hostility ends her up in the modeling profession but only in vain. Again, her unrequited love for Dharma is no refugee either. Therefore, the choice becomes very clear to Amla: either she loses her identity and merges with the multitude or she braves the odds and gets annihilated in the process like Monisha. She makes her choice albeit sadly she

“digs her heels in, aware of what she is missing, despising herself for compromising, grappling with the powerful reality of the senselessness and negative quality of life” (Krishnaswamy 253).
Amla’s is no better than Monisha. Her predicament is altogether different she is more balanced than Monisha in her attitude to end. Monisha’s death has a salutary effect on her. It has pointed out the way of her, and she would never allow her to lost herself. Her decision to accompany safe people like Bose indicates her will to guard herself henceforth against the life destroying forces.

“Voices in the city” dramatizes the waste land motif of the city as a place that generates aridity of feeling and frustration. Being a boy Nirode adored and admired his mother so intensely that her second marriage shattered his psyche and damaged his heart. His dandy exterior could not conceal his inner misery. Nirode, in no way, likes or loves his mother for becoming the mistress Major Chadha. Nirode’s nihilism and cynicism step from his mother’s betrayal of the family prestige. His study of Camus consoles a bit, as he finds it difficult to assimilate the existential postulates into his scheme of values. The Baudelaire –Camus Gita strand in the narrative, involving Nirode and his sisters takes a dramatic turn because of the tormenting and turbulent external world. Sociologically speaking, the seedy and nauseating industrial backdrop seems to be a fatal factor in generating various kinds of mental aberrations and psychic disorders. Nirode’s wounded self, Monisha’s agonized self and Amla’s insecure self fail to cope with the continuous violence.

“Voices in the City” perpetuates the theme of maladjusted marriage with wider aspect. Not only husband and wife but their children, relations and friends also come under the purview of existential predicament. In this novel, black becomes the predominant colour which symbolizes the darkness and desolation that engulfs the city of Calcutta and which adversely
affects the three central characters in the novel. Philosophically, Anita Desai’s novels remind the reader of the three words that Sartre emphasizes while discussing the human condition “anguish, abandonment and despair”. Simultaneously, the characters are privileged by having the opportunity to make or to mend their choices and lead a life of commitment and responsibility. Sartre in his existential framework rightly pin-points:

“Men is nothing else but what he proposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is therefore, nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is” (358).
Shashi Deshpande’s approach is different from that of all other feminists. She also deals with the excesses committed upon the female fold for centuries leading to their deep but quiet suffering and their passive resignation. But she shows how the women revolt against it and try to search their own identity in the hostile world of male chauvinism. But she has also consideration for a home – a home of peace and love that can provide security to the women.

She feels that security is also an important requirement of women. So, if a home is there in a position to provide her safety, a woman may not revolt against the home in that case. She is not for revolt for the sake of revolt but rather revolt in the sector and degree required. So, she shows that there are some husbands who are good and some women who are not at all prepared even to raise their voice.

Shashi Deshpande is also a good craftsperson. She knows that art lies not in saying a thing but rather in showing a thing. Hence, she is very careful in developing plot and character and their proper interaction, psychological analysis of the characters, symbolism and imagery, language and rhythm, and the weaving of all of them into a living whole.

Take, for example, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. The title is paradoxical. Darkness usually holds terror. But here it is not darkness but the protagonist Saru’s husband that haunts her. Stung by male chauvinism she becomes almost a cynic and says; “A wife must always be a
few feet behind her husband. If he’s an M.A., You should be a B.A., If he’s 5’4” tall, you should not be more than 5’3” tall. If his earning is five hundred rupees, you should not earn more than four hundred and ninety nine rupees. That’s the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage”.

Mark the pathos and irony in the statement. She says further. The Dark Holds no Terrors. The terrors are inside us all the time. The sorrows are inside us all the time. We carry them within us and like traitors they spring out, when least expect them to scratch and maul”.

Here we find a psychological analysis also. This is how our obsessions and fears haunt us like nightmares. The title is not simply symbolic but also metaphoric. This novel, like The Binding Vine and The Long Silence, tries to conform to the metaphoric structure. It seems Shashi Deshpande goes by the suggestion of R.P. Blackmur that if novel wants to attain the stature of poetry and drama, it will have to cease to be mere chronicle and try to conform to the metaphoric structure. The title of The Binding Vine is appropriate in a number of ways. Its symbolism has got what Empson calls the first type of ambiguity – that is, the words or phrases connoting several things, some in one direction, some in the other one.

Shashi Deshpande has her own way of presenting the situations and characters in her novels. The theme of her novels if stated in general terms, is the condition of women vis-a-vis men. She believes that women very often suffer due to male chauvinism and their own defeatism. The novelist places some hard facts to arouse women to action. The title of this novel That Long Silence itself implies that women do not raise their voice against suppression. Jaya was so named by her father because it meant Victory, but Victory never came to her in life. She was married to a man who had no qualms in adopting unfair means for money while she was straight and upright in everything. Jaya had to accept silently what he was doing – she was yoked
with him – yet she was held responsible for all his misdeeds, a scapegoat as she was made by Mohan. She said nothing to disprove the allegations made against her by her own husband, though she knew well that the allegations made against her by her own husband, though she knew well that the allegations were unfounded and meaningless. Deshpande wants the women to be aware of the subordinate position they have placed themselves in for the sake of their husbands and children. They have become wives and mothers, and ceased to be individual woman. Jaya for instance, felt at one stage, when she flipped the pages of her old diaries. She found that there was wife of Mohan and mother of Rahul and Rati all over, but Jaya herself was nowhere. The woman sinks her personality for the sake of her husband and children, yet she remains subordinated to them. Women sink her personality for the sake of her husband and children, yet she remains subordinated to them. In her other novel, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* the heroine Sarita, said plainly that the women must be in a lower position than her husband if she wanted a happy family life for herself. She said to the girls in her lecture, “Listen girls if you want to be happily married, if he’s (husband) an M.A., you should be a B.A., If he’s 5’4” tall you should be 5’3” tall. If he is earning five hundred rupees, you should never earn more than four hundred and ninety nine rupees. That’s the only rule to follow, if you want a happy marriage. “Don’t ever try to reverse doctor – nurse, executive – secretary, principal – teacher role. And I assure you, it isn’t worth it. He’ll suffer, you’ll suffer and so will all the children. Women’s magazines will tell you that a marriage should be an equal partnership. That’s nonsense, Rubbish”. Thus Deshpande wants to bring an awakening among women so that they may fight for equal partnership with men.
She further says that the story of gender discrimination is not a new development—it began since the beginning of civilization. She was given example of Shakuntala who was exhorted by the saints to live in the harem of the king, no matter if the king had refused to recognize her as his wedded life. Again, Draupadi had to follow her husband to the jungle though the husbands had put her at stake and lost her in the game of dice. She then observes that in Sanskrit drama, women characters had to speak prakrit, while male characters spoke Sanskrit, because Sanskrit was considered the language of advanced, learned people. Jaya, the heroine of the novel, felt that prakrit sounded like ‘a baby lisp’. She thought she had been speaking prakrit all her life. Jaya was told by her Ajji not to argue with her husband. And Mohan’s mother, as Jaya was told, never raised her voice against her husband ‘however badly he behaved to her’. On one occasion, Jaya talked Mohan to cook food during the first months of her pregnancy since the smell of oil and spices made her sick. When he expressed his inability, Jaya said that she was sure he would cook well as his mother was a cook. This remark enrages Mohan. He stopped talking to her for days on end. Jaya had to make the first conciliatory move, because she had realized that Mohan was shattered. He didn’t expect such a forthright remark from his wife. On another occasion Jaya was shaken when she saw marks of distaste on Mohan’s face when she had got into temper, signifying that a woman had no right to be angry. He thought that ‘anger made a woman ‘unwomanly’. By all these instances the novelist has shown that woman is not supposed to raise her voice, not to revolt against injustice, whatever happens to her.

With these objectives in mind, the novelist goes to present her characters. The novelist says in her beginning “Nor am I writing a story of a callous, insensitive husband and a sensitive, suffering wife. I’m writing of us. Of Mohan and me”. She obviously wants to say that Mohan
and Jaya are not typical characters, representing the two classes of husbands and wives. She has
drawn particular characters with their own peculiarities. Mohan is not a general case. He had a
bad childhood. He tasted the rigorous of poverty and humiliation. He became in way a
psychological character, obsessed with money, and rooted in present-day moves. When found
himself caught in a financial scam, he said like a modern scammer, “I have just accepted a few
favours from people I know. Things are not too bad, I’m not that involved. Agarwal-I don’t
know how Agarwal slopped, he was always very careful”. He had no compunction, since he was
to make fast bucks.

The writer has used the technique of placing foils to highlight the characteristics of her
characters. Mohan, a man of day-to-day world was married to Jaya, who was rooted in traditional
moral values. When she came to know that Mohan was involved in a financial scam, she thought
of Nair family who had committed hara-kiri on mass. Mohan had tendency to shift his blame to
others. He first said that Agarwal was to blame, but soon changed his stance and said that his
wife was to blame. Jaya, on the contrary, could not say anything in defence though she knew that
allegations against her were false. Next Mohan never cared for Jaya’s feelings, while Jaya was
always careful not to hurt the feelings of her husband. Jaya recollected that she had a mind to
laugh when people who came to Mohan’s party appeared to her, ‘like the animals in Noah’s Ark,
as all of them, she observed had the same smiles and made the same remarks, but she suppressed
her smile, because she would not laugh at anything that mattered to Mohan. She felt, if I did so,
it would diminish him, and who wanted a dwarfed husband? certainly, I didn’t Mohan on the
contrary, went on making false allegations and finally walked out on her.
It is a women centric novel. Naturally, Kusum, Jaya, Mukta, Vanitamami, Jaya’s mother, and grandmother, Jeeja, Nayana, Manda, Nilima, etc occupy the centre-stage. None of these women has any defect of character and everyone of them is the victim of male violence. Jeeja, Nayana, Manda are the domestic servants, discharging essential services. Jaya realised, “All those happy women with husbands in good jobs, men who didn’t drink and beat their wives, those fortunate women whose kitchen shelves gleamed with brass and stainless steel vessels- They were of no use of me. It was Jeeja and her like I needed. It was these women who saved me from the hell of drudgery. Any little freedom I had depended on them”. And Jaya and her like wouldn’t wish them any different life. All of them are made miserable by their men-folk. Jeeja didn’t have child, so she let her irresponsible husband have a second wife, who died leaving her children to be brought up. Jeeja her step son, Rajaram was a drunkard, yet he was married to Nayana. He had given the ultimatum to his wife that he would throw her out if she didn’t give birth to a son. Nayana, being aware that she was the sole earning member, didn’t care for the threat. Rajarama got injured in a broil and had to be admitted in the hospital. In spite of his being an irresponsible man, Jeeja, his wife, Nayana and daughter Manda took care of him, Jaya went to the hospital to request the doctor for better attention to him. They also sold Batatawada near the mill for extra income. Thus this group of women shows the qualities of endurance, sincerity and diligence, but it was shame for the society that they are not treated with sympathy.

Among Jaya’s Kaki’s and Mami’s, Vanitamami deserves a special mention. She was very humble, and submissive. She didn’t revolt against the excesses of her mother-in-law, who didn’t even allow her to buy sarees of her choice. But when she decided to bring Kusum in her family, she braved the opposition in the family. Her own husband didn’t’ like the sight of Kusum but she
didn’t care. Then, she tried her best to get the Dadar flat for Kusum, requested Jaya to find a good job for Kusum’s husband, help the girl in her own way. Jaya did help Kusum. Jaya’s sole consideration was that she was Vanitamami’s Kusum. When Kusum died, it was Vanitamami’s who cried and moaned, consoled Jaya who had helped her in spite of opposition of everybody around her. Vanitamami was only person who had empathy for a neglected girl that Kusum was. Though Kusum’s sister, Shailaja, tried to get favour of Vanitamami, but she failed because she locked innocence and emotions of Kusum. Honour goes to her for her love for the neglected, the defeated and the innocent.

Mukta and her daughter Manda were the neighbours of Jaya at Dadar. Mukta was a young widow, but she was very cooperative and helpful. When Mohan walked out on Jaya, she gave full support to Jaya, who was greatly worried and restless. She went to her churchgate home to see if Mohan was there. She did not find Mohan, instead she found that Rahul had also disappeared, and Rati her daughter spoke indifferently to her. She therefore returned to Dadar in tension and high fever, unable to sustain herself. Mukta got the keys of flat from her bag, opened the door for her, got her to change and got her into bed. Jaya was so much upset that she had been speaking hysterically about Rati. Mukta felt she had been speaking hysterically about Rati. Mukta felt she had temperature of nearly 104. Jaya could recollect nothing except that she had got into the train and a woman sitting there was embroidering something. When Jaya woke up in the morning she found Mukta sitting beside her reading. Nilima and Manda prepared tea for Jaya. Hearing the two girls talking and laughing in the kitchen was soothing. Jaya felt, “This was real pampering. I smiled at her as she covered me with blanket. “So much of caring reminded Jaya of her Appa who felt her fever with the back of her hand and asked her to come out of the
bed as she was quite well. Mukta had the great quality of feeling grateful to anybody that even
did a good turn to her. After she had lost her husband, Kamat encouraged her to do B.Ed. In
return, she was always good and respectful to him and snubbed Jaya for leaving him alone to die.

It is a women-centric novel and the women characters don’t have any defect of character.
They are rather spirits of love, service and forgiveness. Male characters, on the other hand, are
presented as devoid of feelings and sense of responsibility. Mohan, the most important of them,
had no qualms of conscience.

He knowingly entered into a unholy alliance with the contractors, engineers and
bureaucrats, and unabashedly said that he had done nothing except that he got some favours from
the public and okayed the substandard material, and hoped that Agarwal would get enquiry put
off. When he felt that his matters had become public, he shamelessly said that he had to do all
that for the sake of his wife and children and walked out on them, without caring how lonely and
miserable his wife would be.

Another male character was Rajarama, husband of Nayana. He was a drunkard, earned
nothing, threatened to throw out his wife if she gave birth to a girl baby again. He would beat his
wife if she refused to give him money. He got involved in a quarrel with some rogues, got beaten
by them so much that he had to be admitted in the hospital. The whole family was distressed.
Nayana was fed up with him. She said, “so many drunkards die, but this one won’t. He’ll torture
us all to death instead”.

166
Jaya’s Dada was a very selfish person. To make himself free from the responsibility of an unmarried younger sister, he pleaded Mohan’s case very strongly. Jaya recollected, “Dada had wanted me off his hands; he wanted to be free of responsibility for an unmarried younger sister, so that he could go ahead with his plans”. He often said that he wanted to come back from America to his own people, but Jaya knew he would never return.”

The boy Satish wanted to go abroad, without caring for his mother. Her one son had died, and the other was going away. Nilima informed Jaya that one son of Mai was dead and the other was running away. Mai didn’t have a grandson. Naturally her worry was who would cremate her, after her death. Nilima had assured Mai that she would cremate her, but Satish could not give her even this much of assurance, an ungrateful son as he was. Kamat had some graces, but he tried to take liberty with Jaya. The novelist wondered why people have craving for a male child. She had heard Nayana cursing her father and brothers, all of whom were wasters.

Deshpande always chooses to present the action, the events, of the novel in retrospect. In the present novel, Jaya begins her story from the time Mohan came to the Dadar flat to escape ignominy of being involved in a scam and to give a slip to the official action. It is the vantage point from where she could well view the whole drama of her life, comprising of her childhood when her father christened her Jaya, gave her the impression that she was different from all other children, pulled her out of the circle of her friends exhorting her not to mix with them since they could not think beyond being housewives, while his daughter was to go to Oxford, win prizes andhonours, her convent education against the opinion of her uncles and grandmother; her
marriage with Mohan, her empathy with Kusum, death of Kusum and reaction of her mother, Mohan’s involvement in a scam, and his allegations against her, and finally deserting her.

A natural advantage that emerged from this technique of reviewing the incidents is that the novelist is able to discover connections existing between the incidents. As she came to her Dadar flat, she was haldi stains on the curtains which reminded her that Kusum was brought to live in the flat and she had made haldi mark on the bland face of Lakshmi that decorated the calendar. Then the whole film was rewound. She remembered that initially she had disliked Kusum, but her misfortunes had aroused pity and sympathy in the heart of Jaya, and that she had brought Kusum to the Dadar flat against the opposition of all the members of the family. And then the entire chain of emotions and reactions of her own and other members of the family came rushing to her mind. She also recollected that her Vanitamami had laid her claim to the flat because she wanted to give it to Kusum who was virtually a destitute woman, who as Jaya’s mother said, was of no use to anybody. Thus the whole film was replayed and the novelist had the opportunity to watch the whole drama from a critic’s point of view.

As Jaya and Mohan arrived at the Dadar flat, Jaya was full of shame for what her husband had done. She was reminded of Nair family, all the four members of which went, tied together, into the sea, never to return due to remorse and compunction on being involved in a similar scam. Jaya thought on the probability of following Nair’s example, but Mohan being impervious to such delicate emotions dismissed the idea point blank. In his opinion, Nair was a fool and he opted to wait for the time he would be able to resume his work in the same spirit. It was his childhood desire to become rich and get a convent education, English speaking wife.
Then she could re-assess the importance of small events that occurred in her life. She remembered that she had gone to the doctor to request him to pay due attention to Rajaram in the hospital, but she could not tell him that she was a deserted wife, lest he should try to take advantage of it. Similarly, Rahul’s intimate conversation with his uncle, Vasant had made her feel that Rahul was never so intimate with her. Thus the novelist has made a very clear use of the technique of presenting incidents in retrospect.

It is not this that incidents are described in separate chapters – they are cleverly interwoven and narrated in a natural process. For example, one night Jaya and Mohan were lying awake. They heard the whisperings coming through the window. Jaya imagined a couple was talking, but soon they heard the shrieks of the women and it was found that the man was beating the woman to know from her where she had gone that day. The Kamat episode also occurred in a natural way. He had started giving guidance to Jaya in the art of story writing. They came very close in the process and the moment came when he could have sex with her if Jaya’s middle-class morality had not averted the situation. But it was clear to Jaya that she never had companionship from Mohan as she had from Kamat. It can be said that this novel has a close knit plot.

Deshpande has used a very powerful language, full of catch-words and phrases, which get imprinted on the mind, difficult to forget. Jaya’s Vanitamami, for example, told Jaya that ‘husband is like a sheltering tree’. The truth of the remark dawned upon Jaya when she met the doctor for treatment of Rajaram. She could not tell the doctor Mohan had deserted her because she feared that she was open to abuse due to the absence of her husband. The other advice of
Vanitamami was that she should not mind if the husband came to have two-three mistresses. Mohan didn’t have any mistress but his uncanny ways were to be endured willy-nilly. Mohan made a scapegoat of his wife, saying that he had to resort to unfair means for the sake of his wife, though Mohan knew well that dishonesty was ingrained in him. But Jaya could never say to him that he was solely responsible for his misdeeds. The novel opens with the assertion that Jaya and Mohan were the two bullocks yoked together. Jaya, being the wife, didn’t have the right to decide the direction, while Mohan had the option to go anywhere. Jaya was to go in the same direction. But the old niche of man-woman yoked together has been used to indicate woman’s need and tendency to follow man. Jaya followed Mohan to Dadar as Sita and Draupadi followed their husbands in exile.

In order to make her point clear, Deshpande often makes use of the figures of speech and images. For example, when Jaya and Mohan arrived at the Dadar flat, they had virtually no work to do and no engagements. Therefore it is difficult for them to pass their time. The day, she found, rushed at them with the ‘savagery of a dog’. And life became boring like sitting in a stationary train. Being ascetic in nature, she didn’t like Mohan’s habit of collecting curios and gadgets, which took lot of her time in dusting, cleaning and arranging them. She particularly remembered that she had two Mahogany elephants at her churchgate house. They were to be cleaned every day, but when she had come to Dadar, those elephants, she says, were lying like vanquished enemies. When Mohan got a lucrative job in Bombay, Jaya didn’t try to know how he managed to get it. She ought to have enquired about it, but she foolishly enjoyed the comforts and facilities bought with the money. She blindfolded herself to act like ‘Gandhari’, who had bandaged her to become an ideal wife of a blind husband. Describing the psyche of a bride she
says that she cringed in guilt when a meal was cooked badly or too much delayed but when she was praised for anything, she felt enormously pleased and almost wagged her tail, like a dog that has been patted by the master. The unhappy memories of her B-type quarter rankled in her mind as the stench of cockroaches, drains and toilets. When she came to know about sudden disappearance of Rahul, she began to weep, and the weeping was painful and sudden as an unexpected bout of diarrhea. Deshpande has not only embellished her language with these figures of speech but she has made it forceful also.

Shashi Deshpande is a crusader against suppression of women. She wants companionship between man and woman. Her presentation of the case for equality is convincing- since she never deviates from hard realities of life. She has chosen to present a picture of women’s life in middle and lower sections, believing that they make the bulk.

Shashi Deshpande’s novels are concerned with a woman’s- quest for self; an exploration into the female psyche and an understanding of the mysteries of life and the protagonist’s place in it. Mrs. Deshpande began her writing with short stories that later developed to novel writing. *The Legacy*, the first collection of short stories, is now prescribed for the graduate students in Columbia University. Other collections of her short-stories are: *It was Dark, The Miracle* and *It was the Nightingale*. Her novel *Roots and Shadows* (1983) won the Thirumathi Rangammal prize for the best novel of India; and *That Long Silence* (1989) which mark the image of woman and then quest for “Selves”. The traditional Indian women suffer, submit and adjust themselves to the circumstances. The women novelists like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala have, in their words, portrayed this aspect of women’s life without having the first hand
experience of it. Shashi Deshpande has projected this aspect of Indian women with more sensitivity and instinctive understanding as she belongs to this category, in the sense that, unlike other women writers, she is born and brought up on this soil, got her education in this country itself and wrote about India. Mrs. Deshpande’s novels deal with the Indian middle-class women sufferings, frustrations, social agitations, and their stillness as a means of communication.

On the literary map of India women writing Anita Desai appears to be leading luminary. In the critical circles, she is rightly considered to be ‘an Indian Jane Austen and Virginia Woolf. Her short stories and novels have earned for her fame established herself with her remarkable contribution to the development of art and ethos of novel writing technique.

Desai’s novels create colonial effects on our mind and heart for the varying Indian social values and present the microcosmic study of man-woman relationship in the changed atmosphere of the modern times. Among other things, her novels deal with urban life in contrast with Nature and the socio-psycho attitudes of man caught in the crucible of tradition and change. She achieves a cohesive design of content and form in her psychological novels and imposes harmony over different streams of feeling and sensibility, found in different strata of human society. In her novels, we find a fine match between ‘what is life’ and ‘how it has to be lived’ with the natural make-up. In many places, she delves deep into the inner world of her characters and brings out many truths of psychological interest.

Desai, in most of her novels, she tries to mark a distinct break from the traditional themes and techniques used by the earlier Indo-English novelists. She is not concerned with the social,
political or moral problems that beset the characters in the early Indo-English fiction. She chooses new themes and characters. For her “The inner climate, the climate of sensibility that lures or clears or rumbles like thunder on suddenly blazes forth like lightning, is more compelling than the outer weather, the physical geography or the visible action”(63).

In Desai’s novels, there is a rich galaxy of characters, both male and female although she articulates especially the feminine psyche-from childhood to old age. She does not create the dumb characters, whose problems are concerned with food, clothes and shelter. Instead, most of her protagonists feel alienated from the world, from society, from families, from parents or other relations and even from their own selves because they are not ordinary people but individuals made to stand against the general current of life and who fight that current and struggle against it for the realization of an imagined world.

Anita Desai is perhaps the only Indo-English novelist who lays stress on the landscape and correlates it with the psychic state of her protagonists. Desai’s Technique is the natural outcome of her preoccupation with individual psychology combined with her painter’s eye, her innate awareness of the external world. She is always primarily occupied with the subjective experience of her people, their sensations in the presence of one another, but at the same time she is aware of how they look from outside of their tone and manner, the setting in which they play their parts.

The Protagonists of Desai-Sita, Monisha, Amla, all attain the state of alienation due to some common problems. They suffer from psychological trauma. Their inner problems and
reasons which led to their depression and misery are discussed in the conclusion. Desai is in many ways a representative Indian Women novelist in English. Her contribution to fiction in Independent India is more significant than the other women novelist such as Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Saghal or Kamala Markandaya. Jhabvala in many ways is Far away from the main team of Indian writing in English, she has no logical inheritance of the Anglo-Indian Tradition. Though she left India for the U.S.A in 1975, Her pre-occupation with India Continues. Jhabvala lived an worked in India Over a long Period of time and this gave her a greater insight into the Indian background in Portraying her characters than perhaps many of the British and American writers in India. Since she regards herself as observer of Indian Life, she fails to make herself at once with India and her culture. As a consequence, her characters are devoid of Indian Sensibility.

Nayantara Sahgal is the leading practitioner of the political novel in India. She herself has claimed that each of her novels “more or less reflects era we are Passing through “(Jain 20) in addition to the obvious political theme Sahgal shows her preoccupation with the modern Indian women’s search for sexual freedom and self realization. In her Novels the political turmoil of the outside world and the private torment of individuals are women together.

Anita Desai has evoked missed response from her readers. Some have acclaimed her as a great artist, who’s “writing reveal liner realities and psychic reverberations of her characters” (Bande 7) A writer whose forte is the exploration of sensibility “that lures or clears or rumbles like thunder or suddenly blazes forth like lightening, is more compelling than the outer weather, the physical geography or the visible action. “Meenakshi Mukerjee rewards about Anita Desai,
“Her language is marked by three characteristics: sensuous richness a high strung sensitiveness and a love of sound of words” On the other hand Shiv. Kumar writes, “Never does the writer relax her grip the style which often freezes into a strange academic anemic, stilted and petrified, it abounds in tritely compounded and palpably alliterative passages.”(191-92)

Desai has explicitly shown the problems of loneliness, utter isolation from one’s fellow human beings, of lack of real communication that every human being faces all through his life. As a novelist, she is acquainted with the dilemma of the modern woman who has to continue to play the role of the propagator of the human race and the housewife. With the decay of joint-family in India a modern woman who was happy with patriarchal and rural society is left to tend for herself in city life often without even the consolation of religion.

A marriage is a union of two different minds; some adjustment should naturally come from both the sides- the husband and the wife. Similarities between the attitudes of both the husband and the wife to life and things in general, play important roles, in making harmony in their life. General situations in society are such that no proper time or thought is given to these affairs. Women become victims of this type of marriage. Their dependence and traditional approach to them make them to be alienated from others. They struggle a lot to fulfill their inner desires. When it proves to be a failure they become hopeless. They find solution in committing suicide of living separately.

Desai’s protagonists suffer in silence, perceive the agonies of existence and quietly withdraw into their own worlds. Monisha in Voices in the City is circumscribed in an uninspiring
environment. Yet besides being sensitively analytical about her own condition, she does not assert against her circumscribed status. Desai brilliantly contains the defiance of her heroine in death. In fact, in her death, Monisha attempts to transcend the pettiness of her colorless existence. She has the right to take her own life though she has no right to alter the circumstances that lead to her death.

Memory plays a crucial role in the protagonist’s sense of real and the unreal in Desai’s fiction. Amla often recalls her childhood memories in order to furnish a colourful vision in front of Dharma’s eyes. Sita in Where Shall We Go This Summer? Often remembers her childhood days that probably release her from the agony of present existence/ however, she soon becomes wiser and mellows at the end of the novel, as she realizes the futility of her search for freedom. Sita compromises with the old patriarchal order to retain her status as Raman’s wife. The idea of empowerment is an elusive dream to Desai’s protagonists as they yearn to express themselves in difficult situations. Though Desai does not offer alternative and radical models of female behaviour, she depicts the irreconcilable contradictions, the discontinuous identities and fragmented nature of life of her protagonists. They live and die as dreamers, but are never denied a rare wisdom about their status position in the social fabric to which they belong. It is their ability to live life s women according to their own terms that mark them as strong survivors in a hostile patriarchal world in Desai’s fiction.

Desai offers a complete picture of Monisha succumbing to the agony. Her characters who find themselves trapped in the quack mire of mindless society by Monisha and Amla in the backdrop of hostile joint-family and an indifferent city enact drama of the inner conflict. As is
her wont, Desai delves deep into psyche of struggling India women. She studies the mind under of her microscopic scrutiny. Assisted by her poetic diction and powerful imagery, she examines the agony of sensitive bruised minds in conflict with the forces that are too powerful to be encountered.

The characters of Monisha and Amla are representative of many young women who are trapped in society. The novelist, moreover, presents the growth and maturity of individual consciousness from a cynical sense of loss of identity to the mystical realization of the meaning of existence as well as of his own destiny. The characters of Desai are the mouth-pieces in projecting her point of view that existing social ills are the causes of disintegration in the family life and disillusionment in the personal lives of modern Indian women.

The title of the novel Cry the Peacock is also symbolic. The peacocks and their cries are highly symbolic. The peacock is supposed to be the only creature that knows about its death before hand. It is used as the symbol of Maya, who also knows about her impending death before hand. Like the peacock, she is more in love with life when she knows her peacock; she is more in love with life when she knows her imminent death. The peacock knows that death is the ultimate reality and that when it rains they will die. They gaze at the sky to see the approaching death in the form of dark clouds and thus they are never free from the fear of the presence of death throughout their lives. Thrusting the prophecy of the albino as astrologer, Maya knows that her death is close at hand end. When the peacocks see the clouds loaded with water, they cry out as if in pain; “pia, pia, Lover, lover, Mio, Mio, I die, I die”(95). They want to have the fullness of life in the limited time left. Maya is in a similar situation. She knows that she is
going to die soon and is deeply in love with life. Her suppers because of her deep design to live a full life. The peacocks first fight, then mate and in the end die. This process of their death is symbolic of the end of Maya and her husband Gautama. She has known her fate since her childhood. After the prophecy of the astrologer, she would listen to the peacock’s cry and would experience terrible fear and agony.

Desai concentrates on the predicament of the modern woman in the male-dominated society and her destruction at the altar of marriage. Each one of the frustrated characters adopts his or her own manner of facing the problem of alienation, suffering and boredom. Some individuals succumb to the agony unable to have courage and favorable circumstances to come out of their difficulties. There are women like Monisha who are compelled to extinguish their life by succumbing to the agony. On the other hand, some women like Sita have considerable of courage of conviction and moral support to fight against the difficulties and overcome their psychological problems by accepting reality unable to fight against the odds of life. She strikes a compromise with the suffocating forces which try to mar her life. She accepts the harsh reality of life and seeks satisfaction in her own way. She is a shining example of a modern woman who suffers but yet finds light as the end of her miserable life.

In portraying struggles of these women for identity, Shashi Deshpande waves no feminist banners, launchers into no rabid diatribes. She drives her point home with great subtlety and delicacy. Her novels are a realistic representation of woman’s oppression, and hence are highly susceptible.
A serious Indian women novelist in English, Shashi Deshpande has spent three decades [between the publication of her first collection of stories legacy in 1978 and her latest work moving on, in 2004] in writing about strong, self-willed women and yet she repeatedly expressed her resentment at being labeled a ‘woman writer’.

Desai’s novels centre on existential concerns and are marked by their psychological depth and lyrical beauty. Her fictional canvas however is very narrow, as she finds it more worthwhile to explore a very limited space in human territory than she can be compared to Jane Austen who never ventured beyond the social concerns of her characters covering a large area. In order to compensate for the diminution of narrative structure and to lead depth and intensity to her fictional world, she turns to images and symbols. This mode gives ample scope for introspection, analysis, reflection and reverse.

Desai is a talented novelist who has imparted psychological depth to the Indian English novel. She explores with rare insight and observation of the complexities and intricacies of the human psyche. Her favourite themes – man-woman relationship, alienation, east-west encounter, violence and death are suffused with psychological implications. As Desai has close affinity with psychological novelists, in respect of themes and techniques, she literally uses symbols spontaneously and subconsciously. Voices in the city symbolize the varied voices of sensitive souls, which are futile and meaningless in the City of Death and Despair, Calcutta. The island of Manori in Where Shall We Go This Summer? is evocative symbols of an impending tragedy that occurs in the end of the novel.
Desai has explicitly shown the problems of loneliness, utter isolation from one’s fellow human beings, of lack of real communication that every human being faces all through his life. As a novelist, she is acquainted with the dilemma of the modern woman who has to continue to play the role of the propagator of the human race and the housewife. With the decay of joint-family in India a modern woman who was happy with patriarchal and rural society is left to tend for herself in city life often without even the consolation of religion. Whereas, in portraying struggles of these women for identity, Shashi Deshpande waves no feminist banners, launchers into no rabid diatribes. She drives her point home with great subtlety and delicacy. Her novels are a realistic representation of woman’s oppression, and hence are highly susceptible.