Chapter One

Introduction

A literary creation does not come into existence by itself; its emergence is determined by social situations. The relation between literature and society is reciprocal. Both serve as cause and effect to each other. Of all the literary forms, the novel is considered to be the most socially-oriented because it depicts human relationships in its varied aspects. The novel may be considered a document of social criticism and it tends to reflect the contingent reality in an artistic fiction. Though the novel is an importation from the West, it has taken roots in the Indian soil. One can profitably examine the theme of man-woman relationship as given within the created compass of a novel. This fictive world is a peculiarly sensible way of revealing the equations of man and woman in Indian society. Indian novelists have risen to the occasion and adequately reflected the various human relationships, especially the image of woman and man-woman relationship. The theme of man-woman relationship has been the focus of many literary works in contemporary Indian fiction.

Fiction today is seriously concerned with the changing perceptions of man-woman relationship as the modern writers are highly involved in social reality. Indian writers have dealt with various facets of human relationships most intensely because the traditional heritage of India gives great importance to the family unit. The family in India has been under a process of change during the last few decades, thus substantially affecting man-woman relationship. The
social change which is marked in the Indian society has touched the fringes of
the family and this interaction has brought a significant change in the structure
and various relationships in a family unit, and especially in the spheres of roles
and values. The role of husband and wife is the principal component in a family
context that has undergone a vital change due to growing enlightenment and the
movement for women’s emancipation. In this regard, literature has played a
sterling role in raising the reader’s consciousness towards women’s status in the
society as it has provided a glimpse into female psyche and health with the full
range of female experience. It manifests also the projection of the “New
Woman” who refuses to play a second fiddle to her husband in different walks of
life. Changes especially in the socio-economic conditions have altered the
patriarchal attitudes to gender issues and this contemporary change is reflected
in literature too.

A relationship implies first some sort of intermittent interaction between
two people involving interchanges over an extended period of time. The
interchanges have some degree of mutuality, depending upon the behaviour of
the other. Man’s relationship with woman is eternal. In the psychological
makeup of the human being, man as well as woman is a part. The principle of
male, female vibrations is there everywhere in Nature. Both of them need each
other to achieve their physical as well as psychological completeness. But, of
course, they are known for their gender roles which are based on norms or
standards, created by the society. Masculine roles are usually associated with
strength, aggression, and dominance, while feminine roles are usually associated
with passivity, nurturing and subordination. Gender socialization starts at birth and occurs through four major agents of socialization – family, education, peer groups, and mass media. Repeated socialization over time leads men and women into a false sense that they are acting naturally rather than following a socially constructed role. This is found especially in woman as she accepts her status passively thinking of it as her natural status. But, when she fails to fulfil her socially constructed role, gender issues emerge and they lead to problems in the relationship between man and woman.

Focusing on gender issues makes one see how cultural norms concerning male and female roles affect the dynamics of interaction within both the sexes and how it does affect man-woman relationship especially the husband and wife relationship. By assigning differential roles to men and women, gender norms constrain both genders but in different ways, creating conflicting expectations and behaviours in men and women. Compared to a man, a woman suffers more as the former is in the status of dominating and consequently the latter is suppressed. Women have been normally socialized as caretakers and nurturers, and they have been granted more liberty to experience emotion. Thus, one common pattern for women in relationship with men is to focus on the intimacy to their own detriment as they are more emotionally pooled in the system. On the other hand, men who have been socialized to deny their needs for psychological intimacy and to focus excessively on achieving independence and self-sufficiency may tend to distance themselves emotionally in the relationship.
Men and women are thus known for their own patterns of relationship and communication and it reveals that these patterns are not the result of individual pathology but are prescribed by powerful, long-standing norms. A man or a woman’s failure to follow these norms is mainly responsible for the problems in the relationship between a man and a woman particularly in the relationship between partners. To formulate a more egalitarian view of both man and woman is needed very much for the sake of a good relationship between man and woman especially between partners in their marital life. It points out the direction for change, in which both men and women are free to experience the joys and responsibilities of intimacy and also to pursue fulfilment of their own goals independently. Ideally, in married life, both the partners become empowered individually, while acting to facilitate the other’s growth and they can have a happy problemless married life, if there is mutual understanding between them.

In reality, the society characterizes women as ideally warm, gentle, dependent and submissive. Family life and the work patterns expose the idea that woman should be subordinate to man. Through the ages men have considered themselves as superior to women and thereby, establishing themselves as “Self” and women as the “Other.” Man’s relationship with woman is almost like the bond that exists between a master and a slave. Simone De Beauvoir speaks about this masculine trait in *The Second Sex* explicitly, “... subordinated economically and socially to her husband, the good wife is the man’s most precious treasure. She belongs to him so profoundly that she partakes of the same essence as he;
she has his name, his gods, and he is responsible for her” (207). This sort of attitude does not make good relationship between man and woman and it reflects in various degrees in different types of man-woman relationship and causes lots of problems especially in their married life. And of course it forces us to regard that man-woman relationship remains an enigma.

In ancient India, women have been honoured and considered the intellectual companions of their life partners and have been equal to men. It has been only in the middle ages and down to the present on that the male-ordained moralist society has subordinated women and has denied their rights equal to men. The taboos laid down by Manu have also been responsible for women’s pathetic status of being restricted to the family. Woman’s position in the family as well as in the society has kept on changing all through the ages but remains an inferior one. Manu, the ancient Hindu law-giver proclaims, “Even though the husband be of bad character and seeks pleasure elsewhere he must be constantly worshipped as a God by a faithful wife” (154). It expresses the woman’s stand in her important role of a wife. Even the social reformers of the past have affirmed the woman “enlightened” but “dependent” and to them, a woman is to be given dignity but not freedom. Though the efforts of the great reformers like Swami Vivekananda and Raja Ram Mohan Roy to improve the status of women are genuine and sincere, they have been unable to shake off the basic values of patriarchy which have been deeply embedded in them. The weight of tradition has been too much for their minds to shed. So the ideal woman for them remains the devoted wife and caring mother and her life is to be directed to the service of
her husband and family. Not surprisingly, women themselves have contributed to their state by unquestioningly surrendering and allowing themselves to be controlled and dominated as wives and daughters.

The western influence, coming through liberal education, has forced new values and norms of life upon women. It has become a time of political, cultural and social change and though woman, most of the time, has remained in the family, she has become aware of her own status and her rights. Though in India, woman is given more rights, the rights given to woman remain only in word, because of the dominance of men and the submissive nature of women which are sown so deeply in the Indian psyche. Men mentally are shaped in such a way that they cannot believe in women being equal to them.

Social reforms carried out by the great personalities like Mahatma Gandhi and the foreign personalities like William Bentinck have had their great impact on the status of women in Indian society and have brought them out of the tyranny of the social evils. But the subordination and suffering still linger long and the relief from dependency is still out of the reach of most women. So the battle for emancipation has been taken over by a few educated women who can communicate to the world the bitter experiences of woman as well as their ideas of reform. And the emergence of feminism at the world level has been of great importance. The last few decades have seen the impact of western theoreticians of feminism like Simone De Beauvoir, Betty Friedan and Kate Millett. Feminism is mainly a social theory and political movement, which talks about the parity of women in all spheres of life, political, economic, spiritual and
social. As a philosophy, feminism opposes women’s subordination in the family and the society along with men’s claims to define what is good for women without consulting them. Hence it challenges patriarchal thought, social organization and control mechanism. Feminism and the women’s movement cannot be separated. Feminism is an ideological product of certain economic and social conditions. Karen Offen opines, “Feminism emerges as a concept that can encompass both an ideology and movement for socio-political change, based on a critical analysis of male privilege and women’s subordination within any given society” (151). Feminism has brought about an insistent and searching exploration of the role and status of women in society and it directs a step towards better human relationships.

The recent years have seen a number of women novelists, who make a distinct contribution to literature and earn a name for them in the international literary world. These writers have attempted to break the literary and social norms of the past. The most prominent women writers belonging to the older generation are Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, and Nayantara Sahgal. The earliest writer who has succeeded in breaking the mould is Anita Desai. The novels of Anita Desai mark the beginning of an important phase of growth in Indian English fiction – that is, the gradual shift from the external world to the inner world of the individual. The writers belonging to a relatively younger generation are Shashi Deshpande, Bharati Mukherjee, Anjana Appachana, R.W. Desai, Manju Kapur and Shoba De. While these writers have denied that their novels have any feminist bias, the novels written by them have
a strong feminist intent. Some of the basic themes which prove this are the complexities of man-woman relationship especially in the context of marriage, disturbed adolescence, the attempt to break traditional moulds in which women are trapped, sexual discrimination, introspection and rejection of the dependency syndrome.

The earlier writers have presented the traditional Sita image, an object of pity but later on as times changed, the realistic image of woman, her sense of frustration and alienation have begun to appear. One of the most significant themes of modern Indian fiction is that of man-woman relationship which has a great historical, sociological and cultural significance. Indian novelists have dealt with family relationships with high seriousness as it is important for the happy life of man and woman. They have dealt with all sorts of human experience in a frank manner. These writers are primarily concerned in their novels with the psychological crises in the lives of Indian women who are subjected to physical and psychological torture in a male-dominated society. They focus mainly in their novels on the existential predicament and travails of the subdued women in a male-dominated society governed by rigid traditions and restrictions. These writers being women dive deep into the psyche of the repressed women by virtue of their feminine sensibility and psychological insight and bring to light their issues which are the outcome of Indian women’s psychological and emotional imbalances.

Their main focus has been on the undesirable attitude of men over women as throughout the history women have been reduced to objects by men,
constructed as the “Other” of man. Men have claimed the category of “Self” or “Subject” exclusively for themselves and relegated women to the status of the “Other.” As the title of the work of Bumiller, “May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Sons” highlights, being the mother of sons is a blessing that Indian women receive from elders. In a context such as this, the Indian male’s ego has been overfed and has been provided the status of “Self” and a free hand to rule over woman. Indian masculinity is a complex idea that is deeply entrenched in generations of social conditioning within a tradition-bound cultural setup. It is a truth universally accepted that women, who are physically and mentally equipped to perform on par with men, have not only been denied existence as complete human beings but also deprived of the opportunity to give expression to their feelings. Sushila Singh says:

Human experience for centuries has been synonymous with the masculine experience with the result that the collective image of humanity has been one-sided and incomplete. Woman has not been defined as a subject in her own right but merely has an entity that concerns man either in his real life or his fantasy life. (7)

Women, nearly half of the world’s population, are paradoxically not treated on par with men in all spheres of human activity. They are oppressed, suppressed and marginalised in the matter of sharing the available opportunities for fulfilment of their lives, despite the fact that every woman slaves for the development of her family. Generally women play types of roles which are for the sake of subordinating to the male. Virginia Woolf, while defining women’s
place in the globally prevalent patriarchal setup, voices the sentiments of millions of women. She bemoans the unenviable position of women in the following words:

A very queer, composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She provides poetry from cover to cover: she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband. (41)

Submission of the woman, especially a wife, is ensured with the help of socialisation that begins in early childhood and extends well into adolescence and adulthood. Girl children are brought up in such a way that they are trained to think, speak, dress and behave giving preference to the males around them and stereotypes of mythical figures like Savithri, Draupadi and Gandhari are given to them to emulate. But when they grow, get educated and influenced by the modern thoughts, their new sense of identity and equality clash with the internalised sense of submission and docility and consequently, when they get married later, their marriages threaten to fall asunder. It is this tension between tradition and modernity that the modern writers deal within their novels. Simone De Beauvoir says that one is not born but rather becomes a woman as she has in
her mind the socialisation of the girl. Society visualises women as mothers, daughters, sisters and wives who care for others and never as individuals. The women accept this because they have been taught to be like mythological women like Sita, Draupadi and Gandhari who never framed a question regarding their individuality. But, better education, employment opportunities and more consciousness of female rights and privileges have resulted in a changed perception of the woman and her place in the home and society now. One of the most important changes established now in the society in these years is the evolution of the urban middle-class. With the growth of educational and vocational opportunities, the educated urban middle-class women have become conscious of their status and rights. Impelled by a desire to realize their aspiration for a new way of life, women have begun to voice their feelings freely.

Masculinity or femininity cannot be studied in isolation as they are related to each other and as one construct cannot exist without the other. The relationship between the two sexes has been one of power struggle over the ages. When the woman becomes educated, assertive and self-reliant, the power struggle reaches its peak and in this scenario, the male has to redraw the boundaries to assert his superiority even within a marital relationship. Creation of any identity, masculine or feminine, rests mainly upon the patterns of power structures that exist in a society. The Indian male is largely exposed to a set of beliefs in which male supremacy is unchallenged and female subjugation is taken for granted. The male identity is mainly constructed through personal
possessions and achievements and women always figure on his list of possessions. The important aspect of masculine identity is his sexuality. The male sexuality is seen as a sign of strength whereas the female sexuality is considered a taboo. The male is known for his sexual prowess which plays an important role in creating the collective as well as individual male identities.

Modern times however have upset this unbalanced gender equation with more and more women being emancipated through education and career choices. In the changing scenario, men are also struggling to change their traditional attitudes. It is proved well by women that they are capable of stoical courage when circumstances demand it and they can stand physical pain much better than men. It is women’s nature that they are always trying to conserve, adapt rather than destroy and build everything anew. They prefer compromise and adjustment to revolution. However, these attitudes are not dictated to woman by her hormones but they are inculcated in her by her situation and as the result of her economic, social and historical conditioning. And the fact is that what is conditioned by society can also be changed as Simone De Beauvoir opines, “Let the future be opened to her and she will no longer cling desperately to the past. When women are called upon for concrete action; when they recognize their interest in the designated goals, they are as bold and courageous as men” (614). Of course, the Indian male is caught in the midst of a rapidly changing social setup with educated and empowered women demanding for space in his professional as well as personal arena. Everyone is a victim of some form of social conditioning or the other but it is important for people in a civilised
society to reject practices and beliefs that would oppress other human beings. A 
society must be known for a balanced gender equation in which both men and 
women are able to find their own rightful place for the sake of leading a peaceful 
life with their own freedom.

Women’s search for identity has become a prolific theme as the society 
does lack a balanced gender equation and women suffer a lot due to this. The 
word “identity” is paradoxical in itself, meaning both sameness and 
distinctiveness but when it is applied to woman, its considerations proliferate. 
The quest for identity has been an eternal one plaguing mankind since times 
immemorial. However, for a woman the search for her identity has even been 
unthinkable in a patriarchal setup a few centuries ago. But “she” has walked 
quite a long distance from those times and has arrived at an important juncture 
wherein myriad possibilities to self-identification entice her to choose her 
pathway. A woman has always been an enigma; a mystery, who is far more 
capable of adaptation and flexible to change. She is known for her capability 
which she imbibes from a young age as a result of social conditioning.

Identity for a woman can never be static but bound by her relations, 
transforming as they transform in this way that she is born as a daughter, grows 
up to be a wife and ages as the mother. And she has been known for a question 
“who am I” and the answer to the crucial question is not one but manifold and 
shifting. Conventionally the identity of a woman is dictated by what others 
perceive her to be as per the dictates of the society. She is not her own person 
but an image adjusting and accommodating as per the image predetermined for
her. This identity is not the genuine identity but a distortion of the “Self,” an illusion. A woman’s characteristics are produced not as a consequence of her innate masochism but as a consequence of her history of economic dependency. In existential terms, her identity exists largely as being for others rather than being for herself.

Psychoanalysis has emerged as a valid tool of literary criticism and gained wide acceptability among the critical and intellectual circles as it is one of the applications of postmodernism. Indeed psychoanalysis and literature have always been viewed as two very closely related intellectual disciplines. Literature has actually provided a contiguous field of verification for psychoanalytical propositions. The thing which distinguishes psychoanalytic literary criticism from other approaches is that it usually takes into account those aspects of the works which have been thought as important by the conventional critics. Its practice of integrating these very complicated details into serious discourse has enabled it to come out with new interpretations of literary works. Indian Writing in English seems to be in need of this new and particular approach such as psychoanalysis for it certainly promises to earn it a new respectability and wider acceptance on the world literary stage. Indian fiction and criticism in English is likely to be immensely benefited by incorporating psychoanalytic formulations into the creative and critical endeavour respectively. Psychoanalytic criticism is scientific to the core and is therefore in keeping with the scientific spirit of the present age.
Psychoanalytic literary criticism has always been one of the standard chapters in the history of criticism. It begins with Freud, but rarely ends with him. In its relation to literature it has gone beyond the expected limits. The deterministic findings of psychoanalysis establish the fact that the nature of literature is functionally psychological. Freud’s own contributions to the study of literature highlight the effectiveness of his method. The technique developed by psychoanalysis has emerged as a promising method for examining literature, and has made itself equally attractive to a large number of critics. Freud’s ideas have become so decisive a factor in our culture and thinking today, that it is more difficult than ever to regard him merely as the founder of psychoanalysis. “It would be hard to find in the history of ideas, even in the history of religion, someone whose influence was so immediate, so broad and so deep,” (9) are the words of Richard Wollheim on Freud’s contribution. Psychoanalysis by its very nature encompasses all human mental and emotional phenomena. The study of the unconscious mind for the most part is the subject matter of psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis has equipped the modern literary critic with remarkable knowledge of the inner struggles of literary characters and other aspects of the literary product. Psychoanalytic critical study of literary works is limited to a few stray articles in India. It is now a common thing that Freud’s discoveries of the complex nature of the human mind have led to a fundamental revolution in the approach to literary expressions. Attempts have been made through psychoanalysis to comprehensively view the nature of woman’s “consciousness,” and her concept of “Self.” The society compels every
individual especially women to repress instinctual urges and the desire for the free exercise of will, all in the name of upholding its ideals and expectations which are very oppressive. Writers like Shashi Deshpande are concerned with the woman’s quest for “Self,” and they explore into the female psyche to understand the mysteries of life and the protagonist’s place in it.

Psychoanalysis is an important tool to analyse man-woman relationship and man-woman relationships are fundamental to the survival of the human race. Though men and women are part of the same species, they are not the same in everything. There are similarities between men and women, but there are differences as well. Men and women have the same rights and responsibilities in all relationships and men and women are equal to each other in their relationship to God as it is said in the Bible, “. . . there is neither male nor female for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). The family in India, during the last few decades, has been under a process of change. Thus writings on man-woman relationship have become popular and one of the most significant themes of modern Indian fiction. This relationship is based on the bridge of understanding and common well being. The insights provided by John Gray in *Men, Women and Relationships: Making Peace with the Opposite Sex* seem to be useful in understanding the nature of both man and woman:

Men generally assume that once a woman is fulfilled, she should stay that way. Once he has proven his love, she should know it forever, . . . From the male point of view, this attitude makes perfect sense. Women find this attitude hard to accept. It is just
plain inconsistent with their internal reality. A woman needs to be reassured that she is special, worthy, understandable, and lovable. Men also need to be reassured, but they get that encouragement mainly through their work. Women, however, primarily need assurance through their relationships. (214)

Family consists of many relationships like husband-wife, mother-daughter, daughter-father, and sister-brother. In all these relationships, love, faith and mutual understanding are the basic pillars. The problem arises among these relationships when these pillars are shaken. Though the man-woman relationship in the modern context has undergone a great change, woman is still treated as the “Other.” In the words of Vishwanath Bite, “Formerly, the Indian woman was only a shadow of man. She had not any individual identity. Nowadays the relationship seems quite changing. The women are considered equal to men. But the situation is not totally changed. She is still treated as an object” (1). Literature also beautifully reflects the complex interpersonal relationships between men and women and the social conditioning in their formation.

In the context of the changing world, it has become imperative to do away with separate domains for both, man and woman, and to redefine their relationship as equal and complementary. Of all the other relationships, the husband-wife relationship is considered the principal component in a family context. Though a family context has undergone a vital change due to education and growing enlightenment, man and woman particularly the partners still struggle to attain happiness in their relationship. It is mainly due to their
different nature. And also the attitude of the male towards the woman remains the same throughout the world. And it is beautifully exposed in the Afro-American writer Lorraine Hansberry’s play, *A Raisin in the Sun*. Early in the play, Beneatha, Asagai’s girlfriend, has the following exchange with the male chauvinist, Asagai who is forcing her to marry him:

Beneatha : You never understood that there is more than one kind of feeling which can exist between a man and a woman - or at least, there should be.

Asagai : (Shaking his head negatively but gently) No. Between a man and a woman there need be only one kind of feeling. I have that for you.

Beneatha : I know – and by itself – it won’t do. I can find that anywhere.

Asagai : For a woman it should be enough.

Beneatha : I know- because that’s what it says in all the novels that men write. But it isn’t. (11-12)

Here, though Asagai is known for his revolutionary attitudes in the play, in this area, he remains a traditional and fallible male. In the modern world, men like Asagai are unable to destroy the picture of the submissive woman out of their mind and to understand the demands of woman.
Even in the postmodern period when women are said to have equal rights and opportunities with men, marriage and motherhood remain the main goals of the present day girl’s life, however liberated she may be. Her personal achievement, however great, pales down before her marital status implying her dependence on man. She is always known for her dependence on man at various levels as Ramana Devika rightly observes, “Marriage is the most powerful means that society uses to ensure female subjugation and the institution of marriage, is cleverly camouflaged by sanctity only to ensure male domination and to prevent any questioning by women” (30). In the role of wife, woman suffers a lot. In the words of Sharadha, “the role of a wife restricts her self-development – firstly by taking away her freedom of thought and expression, and secondly, by denying her the scope of giving free play to her artistic potential” (55). Though an Indian woman is educated, employed and is economically independent, family, marriage and social norms bind her completely. Jasbir Jain comments, “The expectations from marriage remain the same even if there is a difference of priorities: protection, economic security, sexual satisfaction, children, and common bond. And problems arise due to estrangement, unemployment, brutal claims of the male or alcoholism” (90).

Shashi Deshpande is one of the most accomplished contemporary Indian women writers in English, who highlight the problems of women in the society. She has emerged as a great literary force. Writers like Deshpande have discussed the various dimensions of identity crisis. In her writings, she reflects a realistic picture of contemporary middle-class women. She focuses on women’s issues
and she has a women’s perspective on the world. Deshpande’s fictional forte is the exploration of the psyche of women. As G. S. Amur rightly manifests, “Woman’s struggle, in the context of contemporary Indian society, to find and preserve her identity as wife, mother and most important of all, as human being is Shashi Deshpande’s major concern as a creative writer, and this appears in all her important stories” (10). The factors combined to make her one of the most powerful women writers of our times are that she is the daughter of a famous Kannada dramatist, her education which has been exclusively in English has exposed her to writers like Doris Lessing, Simone De Beauvoir, and Jane Austen, and her childhood and adolescence, have been passed in an atmosphere redolent with discussions on books and ideas, reading and rehearsals. The reason for Deshpande to write is that it allows her to create her own world from which she can explore a wide range of experience, especially in regard to women’s status in society. She sensitively portrays the lot of women and their mute convoluted self-abnegation in her stories. For the courageous and sensitive treatment of large and significant themes, her works are regarded as outstanding contributions to Indian Literature in English.

Deshpande has begun her career as a short story writer. The form of the short story has provided her excellent training ground. The choice of the story as a form allows the author to explore and probe issues that would have been out of place in the plot of the novel. Several themes of Deshpande’s novels have their genesis in her early short stories. The short stories record the dilemmas in the lives of protagonists who are single, married, divorced or widowed but the focus
in the novels is on the protagonist as a wife. The themes of sexuality and man-woman relationship initially introduced in her stories have become the subject of full length novels. Thus a striking thing about her writing is the reoccurrence of certain themes as some themes of her longer works are the enlargement of her short stories. However, the predicament of women, especially the educated middle-class has been most prominently dealt with in her novels. The strong point about her writings is the delineation of women’s inner world, which is quite unique and authentic as there is no exaggeration of things.

Possessing a rare insight into the entire panorama of women’s plight in the present day custom-bound Indian society, Deshpande presents in her works the subtle factors and influences which have contributed to the none too happy position of womanhood in Indian society. She presents her women as individuals capable of breaking away from the traditional constraints to redefine their identities in tune with the changed social ambience of the modern times. Padmarani Rao, in her article “Women in the Literary Corpus of Shashi Deshpande,” rightly expresses that “The changed postmodern society and the adjustments that a woman has to make to fit into the paradigm, with a comparatively traditional cultural outlook is wonderfully presented by Shashi Deshpande in her creative writing.” Like other women writers, she also deals with the excesses committed upon the female lot for centuries and their deep but quiet suffering leading to an attitude of passive resignation. But rather than adopting a hostile approach she prefers a complementary relationship between man and woman and has consideration for a home of love and peace that can
give a feeling of security to women. Deshpande’s women protagonists are not passive sufferers. They revolt against the established customs and try to search their own identity in the hostile world of male chauvinism.

The several counts which can easily single out Deshpande’s work from amongst other writers’ writing in English are the thickly populated world of her novels, the joint families, the working out of relationships within families and marriages, the fine insight into human character, her boldness in treatment of sex and sexuality. All her novels work through a feminine consciousness for example Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Indu in *Roots and Shadows*, Jaya in *That Long Silence*, Urmila in *The Binding Vine*, Sumi in *A Matter of Time* and Madhu in *Small Remedies*. In Deshpande’s products, there is no attempt at selecting a male protagonist, but equally there is no attempt at focusing only on the feminine perspective. Women protagonists and narrators transcend their gender in order to explore the male psyche and avoid stereotypical projections of patriarchal structures. Though their inbuilt compulsions are presented with compassion and understanding, they turn out to be archetypal as they are helpless to come out of traditions utterly. Kamalakar in “Shashi Deshpande and Indian Feminism” states, “She feels that while she is feminist, her novels are novels. She hasn’t written the novels as a debating voice, to develop a thesis in a debate.”

The recurrent themes explored in the novels of Deshpande are oppression of women in the patriarchal world, women’s quest for identity, marriage and motherhood, complexities of mother-daughter relationship and alienation. Her
novels showcase patriarchy’s attempt to marginalize and subjugate its women, whether they are educated middle-class women or poor, deprived and uneducated ones. In her novels, Deshpande explores a world darkened by the despair and unhappiness of women trying to break out of the roles pre-defined by patriarchy. Shaliendra Singh and Radika Bansal in their article, “Patriarchy in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande” expose Deshpande’s reasons for writing, which Deshpande herself has expressed in her interview with Gita Vishwanath, as follows:

I have seen girls being paraded; I mean being shown to boys for marriage. I remember when I was with my mother’s family in Poona, there was a girl in the family who was rejected. I was younger than her and was not consciously thinking about it. Later it came back to me, how much pain that girl must have felt. For example, widows, there were many widows in my family. There was a lot of unthinking cruelty towards them, in the way they had to dress, the way they were at everybody’s service, as if they had not a life of their own . . . thought of all these things which impelled me to write. In fact these were the very things that forced me into writing; it sort of piled up in me and poured out in all the novels. (15)

Deshpande’s novels explore in great psychological depth, the oppression of women by patriarchal society and women’s own complicity in their oppression.
Deshpande is the daughter of the late Adya Rangachar “Sriranga,” the famous Kannada playwright. Speaking of the influences that shaped Deshpande as a writer, she asserts that her father occupies a significant place. His liberal and radical ideas have played an important role in shaping her outlook. She comes from a Brahmin family where her father has never allowed his children to state their caste and has never brought up his daughters with prejudice and bias towards their gender. He has thus played a major role in the moulding of Deshpande’s values and principles. However he has not influenced her writing style at any point as he is a man of ideas. Every play of his is about an idea, but not about human beings, characters.

On the other hand, Deshpande is more concerned about the concrete and practical realities of day-to-day human existence especially that of the woman, told from the woman’s point of view. Though she denies any direct influence of Simone De Beauvoir, Betty Friedan and Germaine Greer, they have added to her understanding of the socialization and marginalization of a woman. Her work is equal to that of the established writers like Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal. Her concern for women and their oppression is reflected strongly in all her writings. In response to a query about her sudden beginning as a writer, Deshpande has revealed the following to Geetha Gangadharan:

‘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
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.’ (251-52)

Deshpande’s answer expresses that she could well be one of her own developed protagonist wives who learn how to break their silence and find their voice and identity.

The social and cultural change in the post-Independent India has made the women conscious of the need to define themselves, their status in society, and their relationship with their surroundings. Deshpande’s concern is to explore the root cause of the fragmentation and the dichotomy of her characters and to find out what happens in the psyche of her women in the process of individuation. In the words of Suman Bala, “In her novels, Deshpande has depicted different aspects of middle-class women’s life. Instead of fighting against the patriarchal society and male domination, she has taken a balanced view of life from a woman’s point of view” (16). Deshpande has extensively dealt with the theme of man-woman relationship which has a pervasive significance at all levels.

Deshpande’s novels primarily explore experiences of oppression of Indian women in the domestic setup, 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 an ingrained, deeply entrenched patriarchal system - all of which give rise to problems specific to their sex” (8)
as Deshpande expresses under the title “Demythifying Womanhood.” Mostly, 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. Penelope Brown observes that the oppression of women occurs “. . . if they don’t have control over their lives, decision-making ability, freedom of choice. . . . [I]f they are vulnerable to physical attack by men. . . . [I]f there are valued cultural activities from which they are excluded . . .” (244). The Indian woman finds herself a victim of oppression at all such levels and her subordination is total at almost all stages of her life.

Fortunately, the western education awakens in her a desire for freedom and individuality which is resisted in a traditional society and this leaves her alienated and discontented. This can be well identified in the protagonists of Deshpande’s fiction. The marital relationship, too, has its share of overt and covert manifestations of oppression. Both men and women are socialized into accepting the male superiority. It may be strange but 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.

Deshpande has revealed much about human relationships in her novels and of course they are all intense human documents that reveal significantly about human psyche. Deshpande’s literary leanings are pointedly devoted to the task of unearthing and unbosoming a well-estimated account of deep-seated
reality of female psyche and its operation in a postmodern context. In “Shashi Deshpande’s Vision in her Novel Moving On,” Nidhi Bhatt avers, “Her novels reveal the man-made patriarchal traditions and uneasiness of the modern Indian woman in being a part of them.” Deshpande attempts to deconstruct the numerous levels of patriarchal and sexist bias employed towards girls and women in Indian middle-class society, particularly in a marriage or within the family setup. Though she is a feminist in her own way, she does not recommend militancy because she feels that in the Indian context, aggressive feminism does not ring true and that for Indian women, selfhood will come only from analysing and thinking for one self.

Deshpande’s ideas about feminism differ from those of the other feminists. For her, feminism means an improved relationship between man and woman, an erasure of gender discrimination and all oppressive practices against woman from “female foeticide and unequal pay to dowry and rape,” (12) as she has stressed in “No Woman is an Island” in The Sunday Times of India. Her feminism sometimes seems a little “uncertain” because it is not anti-male. However, Deshpande is firm in her conviction that particularly in India, feminism cannot be “anti-male” since both man and woman have to communicate and work towards “a better, more meaningful, companionable relationship,” (12) as she has expressed in “No Woman is an Island.” Asked by Geetha Gangadharan, whether she would like to call herself a feminist, Deshpande replies as follows:
‘Yes, I would. I am a feminist in the sense that, I think, we need to have a world, which we should recognize as a place for all of us human beings. There is no superior and inferior, we are two halves of one species. I fully agree with Simone de Beauvoir that “the fact that we are human, is much more important than our being men and women.” I think that’s my idea of feminism.’ (254)


Mrinalini Sebastian’s *The Enterprise of Reading Differently: The Novels of Shashi Deshpande in Postcolonial Arguments* discusses the possibility of postcolonial readings of literary texts and presents the novels of the Indian writer Deshpande in a postcolonial framework. K. K. Sunalini’s *Wo[men] – Journey of Life in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande and Anne Tyler* focuses mainly on the conception of art and recurrent themes in the novels of these illustrious writers.
The book also examines their approaches to the various issues, but especially the complexity of human relations. Mukta Atrey and Viney Kirpal’s *Shashi Deshpande – A Feminist Study of Her Fiction* is a full-length feminist study of Deshpande’s fiction and this book provides a culture-specific reading of Deshpande’s themes and technique. *Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande* reveals Deshpande’s instinctive ability to articulate the feelings of the contemporary, urban, educated upper middle-class woman who is caught in the transitional period between tradition and modernity.

A number of articles have been published on Deshpande in many national and international journals. These articles shed light on the fictional world of Deshpande and the stature of women in man-woman relationship. To mention a few, Harish Chand Singh’s “Woman’s Quest for Self: A Balancing Phenomenon in Shashi Deshpande’s Fiction” examines the quest for self in Deshpande’s fictional works. Padmarani Rao’s “Women in the Literary Corpus of Shashi Deshpande” reflects Deshpande’s women’s struggle to obtain certain autonomy and thereby reveals their immense potentialities for action and self-actualization. Dalvir Singh Gahlawat’s “Changing Image of Woman in the Novels *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *That Long Silence* of Shashi Deshpande” projects Deshpande with her extraordinary literary and inventive theoretical power which presents human aspects comprehensively in a new light. Ashish Gupta’s “Ambivalent Attitude of Indian Woman in Shashi Deshpande’s *That Long Silence*” presents the ambivalent attitude of contemporary independent minded Indian women who are struggling to adjust rather than get free from the traditional world.
Deshpande’s fictional world is a fine blend of three aspects of human life i.e. political, social and psychological. But the aspects of psychological realism of an individual psyche predominantly pervade almost all her novels. Deshpande shows a great insight into the complexities of human behaviour. Like other contemporary women writers, she too is aware of the predicament of woman in India and therefore her writings are feminist, however she shows a marked difference of approach. As woman writer, she focuses mainly on women as they suffer a lot due to the man-made constructs in the patriarchal society. Through her women, first, Deshpande tries to find who she is and then, she tries to relate herself with them to evaluate the real status of women in the Indian traditional society and to unearth the solutions for their difficulties. To Deshpande, man-woman relationship serves as the peak of universal experience. Her delineation of her women characters marks the struggle of present day women to come to terms in their relationship with father, husband, lover and other men. In order to unravel the complexities in man-woman relationship, Deshpande goes deep into the psyche of her men and women characters and tries to find out the root cause of the fragmentation in their life. This perceptual approach of Deshpande in depicting her characters has forced the researcher incline towards a psychoanalytic scrutiny of Deshpande’s men and women in her novels. The thesis entitled “Man-Woman Relationship: An Enigma – A Psychoanalytical Study of the Select Fiction of Shashi Deshpande” is an attempt to explore man-woman relationship from a psychoanalytic perspective as presented in the novels of Deshpande. The Binding Vine, A Matter of Time, Small Remedies, Moving On and In the Country of Deceit are the novels chosen for study.
Deshpande’s *The Binding Vine*, published in 1993, portrays her middle-class female protagonist’s predicament in a male-dominated society. The innermost recesses of a woman’s heart are brought to light through the perspectives of the protagonist, Urmila. The death of a second child forms the occasion for a journey into the past, into herself and into the future. The experience is the one which minutely analyses all the relationships a woman in the Indian society is subjected to. It also enshrines her search for love, meaning and happiness in life, a search for something to cling to in the strange ambience she perforce lives. The final resolution is one which points at a relationship that is healthy, satisfying and something that is based on love. Deshpande conjures up a woman’s vision of life which is expressed in the novel partly through the consciousness of Urmila, the protagonist, and partly through the consciousness of other female characters like Vanaa, Urmila’s friend, Mira, Urmila’s mother-in-law and Shakutai, the mother of a rape-victim.

*A Matter of Time*, published in 1996, is a fine, taut and amazing novel. It explores the entangled and obscure relationship within an extended family. The family encompasses almost three generations of men and women but this outstanding fictional work portrays mainly a valiant woman Sumi, more matured and more dignified than her predecessors. Sumi, the protagonist of the novel, after a great deal of suffering and self-introspection, ultimately comes to a point with a great understanding and acceptance of the past and is ready to move ahead with a new idea and acceptance of life. Sumi faces a precarious condition and the reason for it is her husband, Gopal, who suddenly walks out on the
family. Gopal leaves Sumi and his three daughters, Aru, Charu and Seema for no reason. This incident brings to the mind Sumi’s mother, Kalyani, her own desolation and deprecation in her marital relationship. Sumi with her three daughters returns to her parental home. The unexpected decision of her husband to leave the family makes Sumi experience the dilemma of a deserted wife and anguish of an isolated counterpart. The novel brings forward the story of a divided family, love and happiness, imposed bondage, and the individual freedom. Sumi, the protagonist of the novel, eventually succeeds to accomplish her inner freedom with better sense of perception and human understanding. It is also the exploration of man and woman’s relationship in the context of existentialism and a sensitive story of resurrection and hope. It is Deshpande’s first novel published in the US.

Small Remedies, published in 2000, is the novel which explores the lives of two women, one obsessed with music and the other, a passionate believer in communism. These two women break away from their families to seek fulfilment in public life. It depicts the dynamics of human emotions, especially how people run away from the sorrows that engulf their lives. It also works at different levels – the personal and the communal dealing with women’s rights, communal violence, motherhood etc. It vacillates between the present and the past, delving into the lives of Savitribai, Leela, Munni and the narrator Madhu herself. It is structured as a biography within a biography with the writer as well as the protagonist of the novel, Madhu. The novel represents a mature vision of life where the author tries to seek justifications for the complex nature of man
and woman relationship. It is actually redefining and remaking the established social images in the context of the issues like the idealism of motherhood, woman’s quest for identity and the consistent lingering shadows of guilt and shame.

*Moving On,* published in 2004 is a family story of intimate spaces, emotional wounds and intrusions that are absolutely unexpected. One of the aspects that contribute to the construction of the narrative is the many betrayals and violations. The novel symbolises the inner struggle of the protagonist, Manjari, an educated one, prematurely widowed, living in close association with society, brushing aside all its narrow conventions. In this novel, Deshpande gives us a complex character who tries to achieve her real “Self” through her struggles. The novel also projects Manjari as a woman who resists the patriarchal ideology and tries to live on her own terms. It is a story that begins, conventionally enough with a woman’s discovery of her father’s diary. As Manjari unlocks the past through its pages rescuing old memories, recasting events and responses, the present makes its own demands. The novel is about the select lives of men and women who love, hate, plot and debate with an intensity that will absorb every reader.

The novel *In the Country of Deceit,* published in 2008, too contains some of the exclusive themes of Deshpande’s writing but differs from her other novels in terms of its bold subject matter and entirely novel treatment. The title of the novel is straightforward and is capable of drawing readers’ attention. This is Deshpande’s first love story and a carefully constructed and calibrated novel.
Deshpande has often said that she is curious about people and the world around them. All her novels are about relationships and particularly this one is about love between a married man and an unmarried woman. This novel is hailed to be a subtle many layered exploration of the consequences of betrayal on people and relationships. It highlights the love making and its final conclusion. Love is seen altering into sex whenever it finds opportunity but ultimately when the lovers, Ashok and Devayani, reach its peak they have to face the dire consequence for the love is not in accordance with the petty norms of orthodox society which is known for its concocted customs.

The search for identity of Deshpande’s protagonists begins with their frustrating experiences with the imprisoning patriarchy of Indian society. A host of male characters, all of them minor, display different aspects of patriarchy and oppression. These male characters are flat and their representation emerges entirely from the protagonists’ point of view. To understand the true status of women in the Indian patriarchal society and their quest for self-identity, the study of male characters, who play the role of husbands, lovers, fathers and brothers, is very essential. Every novel contains portraits of the husbands, men friends, fathers, brothers and sons of the protagonists. Each of the men characters has to be studied in the context of his relationship with the protagonist. The husbands of the protagonists are the most important among the male characters. Actually it is the reactions to their behaviour that trigger off in the protagonists a quest for selfhood.
There are different types of relationship like father-daughter relationship, mother-son relationship, brother-sister relationship and husband-wife relationship. In each type, we can identify problems in various degrees as the man is always in the position of dominating over woman. But compared to the husband-wife relationship, the other types of relationship are known for fewer problems. These difficulties in the relationship between man and woman make one wonder as how they can reach the fruitful stage of their life, especially in the case of partners in their marital relationship. And, in a way one is forced to feel that the relationship between man and woman mostly remains an enigma as both the categories of man and woman are known for their own different nature though both belong to the human category and both of them need the other to make their life complete. As it is the centre of all the other relationships in a family context, the husband-wife relationship as deliberated in the novels of Deshpande has been focused mainly in the thesis to elucidate the question whether man-woman relationship is an enigma. The hypothesis is implied in the way of raising the question through the single word “enigma” itself.

This thesis consists of five chapters. The introductory chapter gives an account of the author, Shashi Deshpande and her works, and also focuses on man-woman relationship, the most significant theme of Indian fiction. The chapter scrutinizes the position of Deshpande as a writer and discusses her novels which are all intense human documents that reveal significant human relationships. It also sets down how it has been proposed to make a study on men and women characters from a psychoanalytic perspective in the fiction of
Deshpande, as her novels are concerned with woman’s quest for “Self” in the male-dominated society. The second chapter “Myths and Realities” explains how traditional as well as modern women are projections of the archetypal women as the traditional patterns are strongly imbued in their psyche. It also explicates how the confined space which is meant for these women lot in the traditional Indian-setup is in response towards the Sita / Savithri prototype or the ideas or beliefs provided by mythical stories. These features are analysed through Jung’s concept of archetypes.

The third chapter “Self and the Other” aims to explicate the fact that in their quest for identity, both Deshpande’s men and women struggle to attain happiness and they encounter conflicts and sufferings during the process of their self-discovery that of course affects the man-woman relationship. All these are analysed in the light of Hegel and Simone De Beauvoir’s ideas of “Self” and the “Other.” The fourth chapter “Language and Logic” deals with the intricacies of language, which play an important role in communication between man and woman and especially between husband and wife and it manifests how one’s misunderstanding of the language of the other leads to problems between them. Derrida and Lacan’s critical approaches are brought in to analyse the role of language in defining relationships. The last chapter “Summation” sums up the findings of the research and acknowledges the limitations of the study. It also suggests fresh avenues for further research.
Gender stereotypes are mainly responsible for the problems in the relationship between man and woman as they prohibit the possibility of developing a better relationship between them. The attitudes and expectations surrounding gender roles are based not on any inherent or natural gender differences but on stereotypes or the over generalizing of the attitudes, traits, or behaviour patterns of women or men. These gender stereotypes form the basis of sexism, or the prejudiced beliefs that value one sex over another and they lead to problems in man-woman relationship. The following chapter analyses these concepts in detail.

The researcher has followed the seventh edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 2009.*