The thesis focuses on women’s struggle for existence in society. All the eight novels taken for study discuss the protagonist as well as another women’s struggle for money, identity, education, freedom, marital problems are the major issue of these two writers. This occurs due to cultural alienation and gender inequality. Men enjoy every kind of freedom in an orthodox society. They can express their views and feelings about almost everything, on the other hand, women are supposed to be always mute and submissive. They have to mould themselves according to the needs and instructions of the family. They are treated as the private property of the male. Shashi Deshpande and Shobha De depict the subjugation of women in their novels.

**Sarita**, the heroine of Deshpande is upbraided in totally traditional atmosphere where she is always considered as a second sex. She is advised not to go out in the sun as it will darken her skin which will create difficulty in her marriage. Her husband turns a sadist which ruins the marriage. His traditional male psyche cannot bear his wife’s economical independence. He cannot tolerate her being a bread winner of the family and getting more honor by the society than him. Saru’s parents and husband look at women with the prejudices and can’t think of her being prominent in family. They don’t take her as a human being. Manohar uses Saru’s body as a means of expressing his male ego and going vent to his frustration. **Indu**, too, is depicted as a physical entity; her upbringing in traditional joint family teaches her to submit herself. Her husband Jayant doesn’t look at her as a human being. He makes her hide her responses as a woman.

**Jaya** learns from Vanita Mami that ‘husband is a sheltering tree’. Her husband Jayant patriarchal male treats her more like a woman and less as a human being. Mohan has no problem with Jaya until she plays the role of a submissive wife for seventeen years; but when she starts thinking about
herself, the relationship began to track. **Urmila** though not very poor, has been leading a contented married life. She is educated and teaches in a college. But the happiness of her domestic life is marred by the unexpected death of her female body. Anu she remembers the child time and again and sorrows over it in her despair she bangs her head against the wall. The experience of frustrated motherhood keeps on gnawing at her soul.

Shobha De’s heroine faces the same problem. De tends to sanction all kinds of pre-marital and extra-marital relationship of women. She thinks that sex is tabooed and inhibited simply to victimize women in society. All the major women characters in *Socialite Evenings* subscribe to this attitude. The middle class society in India, particularly, adhere much to the idea of tabooed sex that is why **Karuna** and **Anjali** wanted to transgress the middle class label on them and wanted to join the so called elite class where they thought their sexual escapades and avarice would be easily sanctioned. They thought the glamour and pompousness of high class society would camouflage their sexual overtones.

De’s *Starry Nights* sprinkles rose-colored light on the darkness which has enveloped a film actress, **Aasha Rani**. Her odyssey to stardom is most painful. She experiences emptiness at every step in her life. She swims across pent-up emotions. **Alisha** and **Mikki Hiralal**, daughter of the same father but different mothers, who are in a stiff competition to make a place in business both the women leave no stone unturned to reach the top most positions in this highly competitive field. Mikki, in her bid to save her business empire, marries another business tycoon Binny who turns out to be a cheat. Mikki suffers in marriage. But Alisha prospers in her business. Later she comes to her sister for Mikki’s rescue despite their initial enmity as half-sister. They decided to face the world together as sisters. In these two women De gives a true picture of the fiercely ambitious modern new women.
Amrita faces sexual abuse from Minx and even submits to it, though she slowly begins to enjoy this new experience, as she starts adapting it as a part of her existence in Mumbai. Despite her strong initial rejections of it Minx’s lesbianism becomes Amrita’s delights. Amrita’s staying away from home and staying alone in Mumbai for her modeling career shows how much goal oriented and individualistic she is. She is so happy with her modeling career and the fame she gets from it that she does not allow her unnatural sexual relationship with Minx to become a hindrance. The same thing happens with the heroines of Shashi Deshpande and Shobha De who, finally, do not follow any radical step but the traditional one.

Sarita, a doctor, who practices well, is the bread winner of family is much respected in the society. Though she possesses high qualification, she doesn’t dare to break the social taboos. In spite of being terribly oppressed by her husband, she hardly thinks of leaving him. After a withdrawal, finally she chooses to go to him and sustain her marriage. Indu like Saru chooses the same in spite of her bright career as a journalist and writer. Indu, too, goes back to Jayant and does not try to cross the limits of marriage Jaya an acclaimed writer and columnist, prefers marital security to her career she too chooses to go to Mohan. Like Jaya, Saru, Indu, Urmila, too, a good college teacher. No other character in Shashi Deshpande’s earlier novels is so rebellious like Urmila. She faces not only her problems but others also.

In comparison with Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De’s heroines are too much career conscious. Karuna is also educated, she is a model, and she is career oriented woman. She does not return her husband’s home economically, mentally and physically she is a liberated woman. Aasha Rani joins under world of blue films. She is the dream girl of the millions. She wants to keep relation with her husband. Mikki is also interested in her father’s business. She wants to save her father’s industries from bankrupt but
lastly she broke relation with her husband to get divorce. And Meenakshi too is a model and her lesbian are relations with Amrita.

Shashi Deshpande appears to believe that by not protesting and offering resistance the women have to blame themselves for their own victimization. She therefore, suggests that they themselves have to break the shackles that have kept them in a state of captivity for several centuries. Finding themselves trapped in the role assigned to them by society, her women attempt to assert their individuality and confront their husband in search of freedom. They try to redefine human relationships, without rejecting outright. The cultural and social background they realize is the need to live in the family but reject the role prescribed to them by the society. They try to achieve self-identity, independence and existence within the confines of marriage. Deshpande’s heroine consider marriage as an important social institution and solutions are sought within the marriage, marriage’ marital bonds and marital relationship form important segment of their lives. Marital discord has been a problem to them but it never becomes insurmountable. They think that it never becomes insurmountable.

They are struggling to find a solution to the problems and not an escape from it. In striving to uphold social norms of behavior these protagonists are traditional in their approach. They wish to live with the social frame work. At the same time, they are women who are individuals with an awareness of their rights and duties, have legitimate sexual passion and expect an independent autonomous existence. In this sense, they turn between tradition and modernity.

There are some similarities and some contrasts in the novels of Shashi Deshpande and Shobha De. Women’s in De’s novels want sexual pleasure outside their marriage. These women keep a dozen lovers. They want no identity outside the boundary of homes. They feel they are equal to men.
They want their existence to be felt and recognized by all those they come in contact with. These women refuse to bow to tradition and convention and oppression. They are far from the conservative stronghold of Indian society. They have their own social circle; they care little for what their hostile critics in society may say. They do not care for anyone except themselves. They believe that the world is at their feet and sky is the limit for their progress and development. These are the new modern women, a very striking group that is emerging stealthily in Indian aristocratic society and which De presents in her novels with enthusiasm and creative energy.

Indian women over the centuries have been portrayed as pictures of pain, hardship and struggle. They have always been shown as dependants who live at the mercy of the man in their lives. They have no identity, dignity or individuality if they are made to stand a little farther from their men. Shobha De’s female protagonists crave for loneliness; they believe that in that state of being single they can experience independence and live life on their own terms. Their loneliness is a part of their perception of living a beautiful life, alone and independently. Whereas through the character of Indu Shashi Deshpande is portraying the inner struggle of an artist to discover her real self through her inner and natural potentiality of creative writing. Indu asserts her position as a human being equal to that of a man and does not want to submit herself to anyone’s dictates. She is showing struggle between the age-old traditions and the emerging new ideas.

Indu gradually realizes that she doesn’t work for her but for Jayant, who is a kind of archetypical male, imperialistic and subjugate. She always carries with five fears and insecurity. The Dark Holds No Terrors is a telling example of men who are intolerant about playing a second fiddle role in marriage and how their manhood gets hurt when their wives gain a superior status in society. Manu feels embraced and insecure with the rising status of
his wife Saru and with it all the troubles start of her struggle for her existence. But Deshpande has made society equally responsible for their deteriorating relations. The mother-daughter relationship occupies the centre stage. Saru’s mother’s cold and indifferent attitude towards her develops a sense of antagonism in Saru towards her mother she develops diversion to all the traditional values represented by her mother. Saru’s experiences in her crucial years of puberty make her hate womanhood itself. The entire novel revolves around Saru’s uncertain relationship with her mother. It is to cause displeasure to her mother that she takes up medicine as a career and later marries a man from outside her caste.

Socialite Evenings deals with a struggle of a woman to attain selfhood, and also denouncement for her objectification in the male dominated society. The narrator, Karuna hills from a typical orthodox middle class family where freedom to woman is rarely permissible. Karuna’s family is headed by her father. The father has got a final say in all matters. Karuna & Anjali are non conformist; Karuna from the very beginning exhibited the tendencies of a non conformist mostly because she hated her middle-class status and middle class morality imposed upon her. Her father suggested that modeling profession does not bring ‘respectability’ to middle-class women. In fact he tends to treat Karuna as an object and material which will be molded as according to his desires. But Karuna asserts herself against such objectification and goes ahead with her endeavor. Her morals are boosted in this venture by a like-minded girl called Anjali. The life style and demeanor of Anjali had almost mesmerized Karuna. Anjali also wanted to give up the middle-class status because it tended to remain tethered to the horrible, disgustful and suffocating middle-class ambience.

In Roots and Shadows Indu, the protagonist undergoes great mental trauma in her childhood and in marriage due to her husband Jayant’s double
standards. Aostensibly educated and liberal, he is intolerant about any deviation on her part from the traditional role of a wife. He is no different from other less educated and conservative Indian men when it comes to playing the role of a husband. Besides, the miserable plight of Indu, Kaki and Atya is revealed to our gaze through Indu’s eyes. The heart reading account of Akka’s child marriage reveals the miserable condition Indian women of the older generation. Shashi Deshpande has remarkably presented the inferior status of women by giving us an insight into the married lives of Indu’s aunts and other relations although Indu is educated and has a liberal outlook. She realizes bitterly that her lot is no different from her numerous illiterate and village bred Aunts and she too is a victim like them of the patriarchal social setup. Another aspect of Deshpande’s novels is the lack of cordial relation between a mother and a daughter: in Roots and Shadows, Indu’s mother dies in childbirth hence a delineation of the mother daughter relationship is not there.

In contrast, Starry Nights deals with the search for identity. It is the main and popular theme of this novel. Aasha Rani is the central character of Starry Nights. She is a modern Indian woman. As a modern woman she is no more passive and silent. She has become bold enough to face the challenges in life. She is capable of surviving in degrading moral values of life. She struggle and compromises with adverse situation in order to assert her existence in the society. The innocent Aasha Rani is thus sexually exploited by Kishan Bhai for the petty help he has rendered to Aasha Rani to make her stand in the world of films. Kishan Bhai was not getting what is known as genuine love from any man. She develops fascination for a man called Akshay Arora. Then she falls headlong in love with Akshay Arora who is a married man. Aasha Rani shared his bed consistently because sex is not a matter which is tabooed for a women like Aasha Rani which is a symbol of a
liberated women. Shobha De perhaps feels that in the male dominated society women are supposed to keep silence in the matter of sex and this is one of the ways of controlling and subjugating women therefore Shobha De candidly and boldly puts forth in her novel what women feel but is ever afraid to express.

In *That Long Silence*, Jaya’s troubles in marriage stem from her husband’s intolerance towards any deviation from her role of a subservient wife. When threatened with charges of corruption, he expects her to go into hiding with him, which she refuses to comply with. He is greatly emerged and walks out of the house. Jaya is very confused and miserable as she had all along followed her. Vanita Mami’s advices that husband is like a ‘sheltering tree’ which must be kept alive at any cost, for without in the family becomes unsheltered and vulnerable. She does so but finds herself and the children the more unsheltered and insecure. In *That Long Silence*, Jaya also does not have only cordial relationship with her mother and in turns her mother also does not have any strong material feelings towards her daughter. It is her mother’s disapproval that makes her agree to marry Mohan. Jaya, in her turn, has great attachment to her son, but does not equal warmth towards her daughter. She hates her mother for not living up to the ideal role of the perfect mother. Like story, she tries to be as dissimilar as possible, rejecting her as a role model.

In contrast, in the novel *Sisters* we encounter women who struggle against constraints of being woman and finally succeed in asserting her identity. Mikki Hiralal is the central character in this novel. She comes to Bombay to take charge of her father’s industries known as the Hiralal industries, which are on the very threshold of bankruptcy. She wanted to take hold of the industries of her father which required lot of attention. Revival of industries was the main target of Mikki and this she was ready to undergo
any trial and tribulations? Mikki is a representative modern woman of Shobha De who can shoulder any responsibility. Mikki does not fear the social constraints that are imposed upon a woman who dares to undertake any untraditional task. She is determined to save in industries from going bankrupt and for this purpose; she is advised by Shanay, her cousin to borrow money from her finance Navin. Mikki approaches Navin with request to help her retrieve the industries but it takes her no time to realize that Navin is a putty in his mothers hands. Navin lacks self-respect, which shocks Mikki. Mikki began to dread jar decision and thus she decided to break off the engagement. *Sisters* showed how women are victims of male-passions. Set Hiralal a married man, had raped his watchman’s wife who died in forced abortion. He made Sapanas pregnant and her inside was damaged in abortion. Alisha is his daughter from his kept, Leelaben. Binny Malhotra has a mistress and children but he marries Mikki and forces her to go for abortion otherwise he will divorce her. Instead of giving independence and individuality, he wants to reduce her to a beautiful rubber-woman. Shobha De also exposes urban educated woman who takes man a play thing. Alisha has sexual meeting with Navin, knowing him to be engaged with Mikki once, her action is an act of revenge towards her sister rather them any love; her relationship for Dr. Kurien who purely physical as the doctor has his wife and children.

In *The Binding Vine*, Shashi Deshpande raises the issue of wither to untouched issue of marital rape. Women like Mira Urmi’s mother-in-law, have to bear the night sexual assault by their husbands silently. Other women like Shakutai, her sister Sulu, Kalpana and her sister have their own sorry tulles. Shakutai’s husband is a drunkard and a good-sort-nothing fellow, who leaves his wife and children for another woman. Kalpana is brutally raped by Prabhakar, Shashi’s husband. Urmila takes up cudgels. On the other hand is
Urmi. Her husband is in navy and during his long absence she craves for some physical gratification. Her friendship with Dr. Bhaskar provides her ample opportunity but she never oversteps the boundaries chalked out in marriage. But the painful aspect to this is that this virtue of hers will remain unacknowledged by her husband.

Strange Obsession deals with the theme of women’s struggle to assert her identity in the dominated society. In the Strange Obsession Minx is allegedly raped by her father because the mother failed to give him sexual satisfaction. Minx or Meenakshi is the protagonist of this novel whose chastity is outraged by her own father with impunity. The father holds a key position in the police service and wants Minx, his daughter, not to disclose the monstrous outfit of her father. Minx is asked by her father not to disclose this to anybody but Minx can’t help telling it to her friends, particularly to a hawaldar’s wife.

She wants to befriend Amrita but Amrita is terrified by the abnormal behavior of Meenakshi’s visit to her house during her absence and puts slaughtered animal in the kitchen sink and when Amrita comes, she is horrified of the sight. Minx did not do it to scare Amrita away from her rather the act symbolizes that she desired an abnormal relationship with her it could be said that lesbianism is a kind of abnormally. At another time Minx keeps a frozen read heart in the freeze at Amrita’s house. The sight of the frozen heart was quite terrifying and shocking to Amrita. Both of them represent the different kinds of typology of modern urban set up. They seem to be hardly better than schoolgirls playing adult games. It is through their behavior and conversation that Shobha De throws significant light on the predicament of these two young women.

Shashi Deshpande’s novels are a realistic depiction of any wish and conflict of the modern educated middle class women. Caught between
patriarchy and tradition on the one hand, and self-expression, individuality and independence on the other her, protagonists feel themselves lost and confused and explore ways to fulfill themselves as a human being. Deshpande’s concern and sympathy are essentially for the woman. She has given an honest portrayal of her fears, sufferings, disappointments and frustrations. Besides revealing the woman’s struggle to secure self-respect and self identity and existence through, she lays bare the multiple leaves of oppression, including sexual oppression. Deshpande’s primary concern for the woman makes her a feminist writer.

Shobha De succeeds in making her point clear, the point that women need no longer be silent sufferers that they have the potential for being fierce rebels capable of claiming their equal share in all things that a man enjoys. She shares that was previously denied them. De’s aesthetic lies in her ability to project the taste and temperament of the new women and present factual details as realistically as possible. By depiction their aesthetic perceptions De underlines the new morality that these women believe in. In fact De’s image of the new woman provides a glimpse of the new reality that woman’s awakening can create if she is denied her legitimate rights and recognition by the male dominated society.

In this way, both, Shashi Deshpande and Shobha De tried to free women from the clutches of male-dominated slavery. But Shashi Deshpande wants equal rights and understanding without destroying social structure whereas Shobha De wants to abolish all the male-dominated social traditions and create the supremacy of the women.