

Chapter – I

Introduction

1.1 Introduction:

In Foreword to Jean Filliozat's book, *India, the Country and Its Traditions*, Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of Modern India, traces the basic philosophy of Indian culture in co-existence and tolerance. He comments:

“This concept of co-existence, in the political sphere, is thus basic to Indian thinking.”¹

From Nehru's stance, as it appears above, he emerges as a social thinker with socialist ideas. Though he applied his vision to international relations in politics and religion, he had a strong concern with deplorable state of Indian women whom he perceived as “half the nation”². Therefore, it makes us arrive at the most fundamental and crucial aspect of the nature of man-woman relationship in Indian society. The perception of the ideals of this relationship within the family could make one think of family welfare.

However, the nature of man-woman relationship within the specified structure existed in the form of power relations. The relationship as existed traditionally in ancient and medieval society at large was almost in the form of dictator and dictaforce. Regarding the subordination and suffering of woman, A.S.Altekar (1959) observes:

“The degree to which women were given a voice in the settlement of their marriages, and the management of their households, and the extent to which their propriety rights were recognized, illustrate man's capacity to control the natural love of self, power and possession which is so firmly implanted in every human heart.”³

It indicates that in the patriarchal world, the idea of the relationship had been cultivated by man where woman was treated as a better half, passivised, glorified and exploited. This relationship had been a malformed product of the age-old male-oriented social fabric of human life which had taken its roots deep

in the soil of the so-called religious ideas and practices percolating in the psyche of man and woman.

The nature of the power relationship between man and woman as perceived in the traditional social structure, signifies the need for empowerment of woman. However, it also emphasizes an empowerment of man with a view to become substantive to the overall development of the family irrespective of his existence. Ultimately, it has to communicate the equality of responsibilities, duties, and rights at the wake of the family welfare amounting to the multiple folds of the growth of two generations characterized by kinship, harmony, progress and peace.

From the last decades of the nineteenth century, there began intellectual shaking and agitation regarding the condition of woman in the western society. The energy and force of the West Wind of Women's Movement gradually created a wave of consciousness among women across the world. Especially they explored the nature of the traditional man-woman relationship. They defined the existence of woman emerging from it, and as crusaders, set out for reforming the traditional ideas.

All kinds of efforts worldwide agree that man-woman relationship has been characterized by male superiority and lower status of women. It has been found that socially, economically and politically, women are discriminated and subordinated. This state of affairs has been viewed unfair. Therefore, attempts have been made to change it.

With the Renaissance of Modern India, the Indian social thinkers and reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jyotirao Phule, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Dhondo Keshav Karve and others alongwith the British Raj focused their attention on the deplorable state of Indian woman and traced its causes in the fundamental aspects of patriarchy. The British Raj made resolutions and legislations against the patriarchal customs and traditions which tortured and victimized women. They had existed as a destructive power that could suck the sap of co-life formed between man and woman.

Literary services in the wake of this kind of social structure have done reformatory functions not only in India, but in Europe and America also. In fact,

literature holds symbiotic relationship with society. It becomes the mirror image of society. It is said, "Literature, because it delineates man's anxieties, hopes and aspirations, is perhaps, one of the most effective sociological barometers of the human response to social forces."⁴ Sociological approach to literature then becomes a critical tool which presumes that the relations of arts to society are vitally important and that the investigations of these relations may organize and deepen one's aesthetic experience of a work of art.

The first major work by a woman writer discussing the meanness of woman's existence caused by the patriarchal nature of society is Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex*. In fact, the book deals with the portrayal of women characters in the novels of D.H. Lawrence. The second wave of Women's Movement is stated to be emerging from America with the publication of Betty Friedon's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. In literary criticism, the movement began with the realization of the political significance of the images of women produced and promoted in literary works. As a polemical movement, its primary concern in literary criticism was to explore and combat the stereotype representation of women in literature. One of the earliest forms of this criticism focused on what was called 'Image of woman' in literature. Mary Ellman's essay, *Thinking About Women* (1968) deals with feminine stereotypes. This essay inspired a large number of researchers to contribute detailed reports on the presentation of women by a variety of well-known authors. They intended to transform Ellman's sketch map into the survey of the whole field.

While analyzing the tradition of British Women Novelists, Elaine Showalter perceives feminism in a historical perspective and identifies distinct phases in the Movement. Showalter argues that feminist criticism has gradually shifted its centre from a revisionary reading to a sustained investigation of literature by women. The second mode of feminist criticism engendered by this process is the study of women as writers and its subjects are, the history, styles, themes, genres, structure of writing by women, the psychodynamics of female creativity, the trajectory of individual or collective female career and the evolution and laws of a female literary tradition. In their analysis of the major

Anglo-American women writers of the nineteenth century in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), Sundra Gilbert and Susan Gubar explored anew a distinctive female literary tradition.

Prof. K.R.S. Iyenger, a pioneering research scholar who formed the body and mind of Indian Writing in English identifies and appreciates the efforts of Indian women writing novels in English. He establishes their tradition in his book *Indian Writing in English* (1973). The present research topic emerges from this tradition of Indian women novelists and their studies done by the researchers. The women novelists selected for the present research are Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Arundhati Roy who represent the second half of the twentieth century. The chief reasons behind the selection of these novelists is that all of them are indigenous. They reflect the problems of modern Indian family life, not with purely intellectual traits as Jhabwala or E.M. Forster does in their writings, but with soul. They write with indomitable concern for change towards betterment. The another significant reason behind the selection of these novelists is that they are the novelists writing with psychological realism. In such a situation, it is worthwhile to analyze their works for defining their individual efforts in portraying man-woman relationship and establish their specific tradition in order to add new knowledge to the existing one.

The primary reading of the novels of these novelists show their projection of the conditions of Indian family life, especially the nature of relationship woman holds with man and its damaging impact on woman's life. Therefore, the basic problematization along which the entire range of the critical activity of the present research-work, has been worked out is, "A Study of Man-Woman Relationship in the Selected Novels of Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Arundhati Roy".

According to David Daiches (1967), there has been a considerable breakdown of community belief which has led to the development of private worlds in modern society. It is partly caused by social and economic conditions and it has executed immense effect on literary techniques to be used while framing such realities through literary creativity. Daiches observes:

“This has affected style, plot, vocabulary, subject matter-every aspect of the art of fiction.”⁵

It follows from Daiches that socio-psychological realities in modern society are expressed with the use of specific literary techniques. In fact, the use of themes and techniques together focuses comprehensively on the social realities which occupy the core part of the novelist’s vision. Therefore, the present research takes into account the imagery and the narrative techniques used by the novelists in order to express the sociological and psychological aspects of the theme of human conditions.

From the literary corpus of each novelist under consideration, some of the novels which forcefully display the imbalanced nature of man-woman relationship in the patriarchal context in modern Indian society, have been selected for the studies. Anita Desai’s three novels, *Cry, The Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965) and *Where shall we go this Summer?* (1973) have been considered. Shashi Deshpande’s two novels, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980) and *That long Silence* (1988) are selected alongwith Arundhati Roy’s novel *The God of Small Things* (1997).

Thus, the study consists of the exploration of the nature of man-woman relationship and the use of imagery and narrative techniques used to project it through the selected novels of the three novelists. It also consists of the comparative study of these novels of the three novelists in terms of differences and similarities based on the above mentioned studies characterized by the specific psycho-physical conditions in man-woman relationships, a sense of social change in relation to family welfare and their literary qualities in terms of imagery and narrative techniques as devices in communicating the ultimate sense of the theme.

1.2 Significance of the Theme:

A.N. Dwivedi (1987) observes: “The most dominant and persuasive theme used by the writers of Indo-Anglian novel has been, the focus on the burning problems of contemporary Indian life.”⁶

He refers to the four thematic subgroups summarized by Prof. Riemenschneider. One of them is man’s role and position in society. It defines

man's male-dominating power in relation to woman and hence her subordination and suppression in the patriarchal social environment in the post-independence modern India.

No nation in the democratic world is progressive in a true sense, if the building block of its social structure-family-is not integrated and progressive. The two core elements of this block are man and woman who are ideologically transformed as husband and wife. When India has passed the threshold of the twenty-first century, it can be an intellectual curiosity and the need of time to look back at its post-independence modern and democratic social structure such as the family and the social environment around it. In this regard, some questions can be asked about social change:

What is the impact of new ideas on traditional Indian family life? How much have traditional man-women relationship changed? Has conventional attitude of man to woman changed? What is the position of changing woman before the man? How much is the patriarchal survival and male dominance together with male-female discrimination in the life of Indian family? In the relationships, are there conflicts between old and new? Does it lead to problems for the whole family?

Answers to all these questions and many of this kind are found either in newspapers or television or literature. Though literature is not so much documentary, it presents the complexities of life with a strong touch of reality. Prof. Iyengar observes: "It is the unique role of Indo-Anglian literature both to derive from and to promote an all India consciousness."⁷

It is now clear that the answers to all above questions are profoundly found in literature. Certainly, the research in literature puts the answers critically in a more profound way. It is because literature is the apparent part of ice-berg on the surface of water, and the research in literature shows us the whole of the ice-berg, on and down the water. The significance of the sociological study of novel has been projected by Sulochana Raghav (1987). She comments, "Since the novel provides a sort of documentation for the study of social traditions and cultural change, the study of novel is therefore of a great significance to one trying to know the social change."⁸

It is certain that the research on such literature becomes an opportunity for a researcher to serve in favour of the nation by forming critical judgments about its problems and to express a sense of change towards progress. This is one of the reasons that the researcher is inclined to do research on the selected novels of the women novelists – Anita Desai, Shashi Dehspande and Arundhati Roy - who present the social conditions of the post-independence democratic Indian society.

The overall significance of the theme of the present research is perceived on different levels:

a) This research is an evaluative comparative study of the three novelists with focus on the existence of man-woman relationship as it emerges from their selected novels. It undertakes the analysis of the failure of the man-woman relationship. In addition to this, imagery and narrative techniques used by the three novelists in their novels, have also been studied. It contributes to the existing knowledge in this field in two ways: (i) It would give the detailed critical information about different aspects of man-woman relationship alongwith the novelists' use of the devices such as imagery and narrative. This two-fold study would certainly widen the understanding of the vision of the three novelists. (ii) The knowledge obtained from the comparative studies of the three novelist, with regards to their vision and techniques in portraying woman's relationship with man, would definitely yield genuine knowledge and a pattern of anlysis which would be used by the further researchers. The knowledge thus formed in the whole task will be used by the students of literature.

b) This critical attempt will do the function of social awareness and may change the attitude of individuals towards women and reform the judgment of women about themselves. This research is specially useful for parental awareness regarding their parental duties and responsibilities in family harmony and development. The research through its data-analysis, prescribes indirectly the standards for parental duties.

c) The barometric function of this research work in relation to projecting the social problem of women's suffering in the patriarchal social structure may help the government in reviewing and revising the policies and laws regarding family

welfare. The various schemes, provisions and facilities regarding women's upliftment and ultimate empowerment could be invigorated by the government and non-government organizations.

d) This research is significant for the researcher because it will broaden his vision about literature and literary analysis and train him for further research in literature.

1.3 Aims and Objectives:

The aim of the present critical inquiry is to evaluate the nature of man-woman relationship in the novels of Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Arundhati Roy, on the basis of the textual data collected from the novels under consideration and some of the ideas and principles of sociology and psychology, alongwith the study of the literary devices such as imagery and narrative technique in their specified aspects. The researcher further aims that considering the ultimate vision of social change emerging from the novelists' ironic exposure of the situations reflecting their attitudes and ideas regarding male-dominance and subordination of women in the patriarchal Indian families of the modern Indian society. The study has been organized with the following objectives:

- 1) To evaluate the nature of marital relationship of men and women in the selected novels.
- 2) It has also been one of the objectives to study the other relationships of men and woman with reference to patriarchal environment.
- 3) To analyze the above relationships on the basis of the conditions of living, individual temperament and the specific aspects of the traits, which determine the causes of their actions, their areas of interests and their conflicts at different levels.
- 4) To find out the social and psychological resources and reasons in the relationships of men and women.
- 5) To trace the important influences and the life experiences of the novelists.
- 6) To study the imagery emerging from the figurative language and to prove its application in depicting the human conditions.

7) This research work takes into account the narrative technique used by the novelists in the selected novels. It involves the study of some aspects of narration such as initiation, ending and some other devices as features of narration.

8) This research performs a comparative study of the three novelists with reference to their selected novels by searching for similarities and differences regarding different aspects under consideration, This research attempts to measure social change emerging from the novels.

1.4 Scope and Limitations of the present Research:

C.R. Kothari in his book, *Research Methodology* puts: “Qualitative research is specially important for the behavioural sciences where the aim is to discover the underlying motives of human behaviour. Through such research, we can analyse the various factors which motivate people to behave in a particular manner or which make people like or dislike a particular thing”⁹

The present research is qualitative in nature and it is based on the empirical and conceptual research ideas. The research is primarily based on the data collected from the selected novels of the three novelists. This analytical study of the man-woman relationship involves the use of certain principles and theories from sociology, psychology and literary studies. In the light of these ideas, the individuals and their relationships have been considered in order to arrive at conclusion.

Though this research work refers to some of the feminist ideas and references, it is not essentially a feminist work. It may be woman-centered, as the evaluation of the vision of the novelists projects. The Guiding Principles of the Indian Constitution and some of the Laws and Clauses regarding man-woman discrimination in the light of social justice and right to freedom and progress, have been considered in the ultimate analysis and judgment.

1.5 Methodology:

The present research chiefly involves the library method of studies and research. It mainly consists of the use of text-books, reference books, research journals and newspapers. The intensive reading of the novels is undertaken by the researcher. The specific information regarding characters - their family

background, parental conditions, childhood, the physiological and psychological features, the nature of their living, disturbances and breakdown to their life, their experiences of the family and the society, their perception of themselves and others - is marked from the overall body of the narration. It is collected as data to be used to study the nature of man-woman relationship in its multiple forms. It has been the attempt to interpret the data with sociological and psychological perspectives. The critical considerations about man in relation to society and himself as posed by some of the eminent researchers in sociology and psychology- T.B. Bottomore, Karen Horney, Abraham Maslow and Erich Fromm - have been used in the interpretation and analysis.

The studies of imagery are especially derived from the studies done by M.H. Abrams (1957) Caroline Spurgeon (1935) and W.H. Clemen (1966). The narrative studies have been made by studying the narrative studies of Sudhakar Marathe (1986) and Jasbir Jain (1984). It evolves a specific scheme of studies which includes initiation, ending and other strategies used by the novelists in the narration. Both of these studies try to search as to how far these devices communicate the entire structure of man-woman relationship in its patriarchal and specific contexts.

The comparative analysis of the selected novels of the three novelists is performed on the basis of differences and similarities in the treatment of form and content of the novels. The nature of the social change has been focused. This research work forms its concluding area by following the theory of 'lag between culture and civilization' alongwith the establishment of the three woman novelists with reference to Indian literary tradition in English. The research journals such as Journal of Indian Writing in English, Littercrit, Literary Criterion, Commonwealth Quarterly have been used for references.

1.6 Hypothesis:

This research work is based on the following hypothesis:

The history of mankind is the history of evolution and revolution where change has kept pace with Time. The struggle for freedom, progress and happiness has been the theme of history. The past operates the present and the present directs the future. On the scale of time, civilizations have been walking

fast, but culture has been lagging behind. The very awkward position of the gap between culture and civilization has given rise to problems in modern age. They are found reflected in the modern literature

Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Arundhati Roy are the modern women novelists writing about man-woman relationship as reflected from the post independence modern Indian society. In doing so, they use the techniques of modern novel writing. They are significant part of the tradition of Indian writing in English who have the differences and similarities regarding their vision and techniques.

1.7 Review of the Research work already done in this area:

The prominent women novelists of the post-independence India are Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahagal, Ruth Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherje, Sashi Deshpande and Arundhati Roy.

Prof. K.R.S. Iyenger (1973) while tracing the tradition of women's writing from Toru Dutt, places Anita Desai in the tradition of Indian woman novelists, with mention of her interest not in the outward world of action, but in the inner world of sensibility of a character. With the perception of her first two novels, he remarks:

“Her forte, in other words, is the exploration of sensibility – the particular kind of modern Indian sensibility.”¹⁰ He uses the phrase ‘stream of consciousness’ to refer to her narration.

M.K. Naik (1982) acclaims Anita Desai as a novelist with a remarkable difference. A deep insight is given in his recent book *Indian English Literature* (1980-2000) where he projects the features of Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Arundhati Roy. Shashi Deshpande's writings have been perceived as a part of Indian literature emerging from her rootedness in middle-class Indian family. He comments: “Under statement is the hallmark of her work”¹¹.

According to Naik, all of Deshpande's novels deal with a crisis in the heroine's life, the narrative moves back and forth in time. P.P. Mehta (1968) studies the Indian women novelists. Anita Desai's first novel *Cry the Peacock* is focused with the psycho-analytic aspect along comparison with Virginia

Woolf. Mehta observes: “Her metaphors and personifications as unique and arresting.”¹²

Meenakshi Mukharjee (1971) traces the evolution of Indian fiction with the complexity of its themes and techniques. Along the major studies of Raj Rao, Mulkraj Anand and R.K. Narayan, the focus is on Anita Desai as a novelist. She regards Anita Desai as an Indo-Anglian novelist with “distinctive style and intensely felt individual imagery.”¹³

The imagery in the two novels *Cry, the Peacock* and *Voice in the City* is studied by her with its remarkable poetic nature.

Meena Shirwadkar’s *Image of Woman in the Indo-Anglian Novel* (1979) is a pioneering work which set a tradition of studying women characters in the novels with regards to their position in the patriarchal society. Seema Sunil’s *Man-Women relationship in Indian Fiction* critically examines the treatment of man-woman relationship in India fiction with reference to the representative novels of Shashi Deshpande, Syed Abdul Malik and Rajendra Avasthe. The work establishes a close relationship between sociology and literature and traces the individual features of writing.

There has been a considerable range of research regarding Anita Desai’s novels. Earlier works like Meena Belliappa’s *Anita Desai: A Study of her Fiction* (1971) are the comprehensive studies of her novels focusing on general, thematic and structural aspects.

Jasbir Jain’s *Stairs to the Attic* (1977) shows a comprehensive study of Desai’s novels. She places Desai in Shawalter’s third phase of women’s writing, ‘a self-discovery.’ She argues:

“Her novels are a muted and oblique statements which begin within the larger framework of sexual and emotional responses.”¹³

Usha Bande’s *The Novels of Anita Desai* (1988) is one of the most useful works that deals with the psycho-analysis of Desai’s characters. The characters in the novels have been assessed in the light of the theories of Karen Horney, and Abraham Maslow. In the studies of Anita Desai’s novels, Bande observes:

“Anita Desai’s characters are not case studies of neurosis nor are they evolutionary histories of psychological phenomenon. They are moved by the aesthetics of existence.”¹⁴

Dr. P.F. Patil in his research work, *The Theme of Alienation in the Novels of Anita Desai: A Study* (1992) studies the resources, conditions and the nature of alienation of the characters in the light of the theory of alienation. The striking similarities amongst dissimilarities between the two novelists, Virginia Woolf and Anita Desai have been projected by Asha Kanwar in her work, *Virginia Woolf and Anita Desai: A comparative study*.

Indira Nityanundam her work, *Three Great Indian Women Novelists: Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Bharati Mukherji* (2000) evaluates the portraits of women protagonists of all the three novelists and puts the novelists and their vision in comparison. She explores “existential angst” in Desai’s novels, “self-realization” in Deshpande’s novels and “search for roots” in Bharati Mukherji’s novels as basic motivating facts. Nityanundam comments:

“They herald the changing scenario of novel writing with their in-depth portrayal of the Indian psyche specially seen in their depiction of the women protagonists.”¹⁵

Mrinalini Sebastian in her research work, *The Novels of Shashi Deshpande in Post-colonial Arguments* (2002), analyses some of the arguments of major post-colonial thinkers such as Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha. The study evolves out of juxtaposition of the theory and the texts in her book. *The Novels of Shashi Deshpande* by Sarabjit K. Sandhu makes an exhaustive study of the depiction of the image of woman in her novels. *A Feminist Perspective on the Novel of Shashi Deshpande* by Y.S. Sunita Reddy is another important work which throws light on Deshpande’s novels from feminist point of view. She concludes: “Deshpande’s women are the products of a painful period of a transition in society where they have a greater share of responsibilities than their predecessors”¹⁶

The research regarding Arundhati Roy’s novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997) is almost in the form of research papers and articles published in the journals of literature. There are some books in which research papers are edited

by the scholars. *The Fictional World of Arundhati Roy* (2001) edited by R.S. Pathak is one of such books. R.K. Dhavan (1995) has edited a multi-volume work *Indian Women Novelists* which is a large collection of research articles on women novelists including Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Arundhati Roy. The journals of literature such as *Journal of India Writing in English*, *Littcrit* and *Commonwealth Quarterly* show numerous research papers written on the various aspects of these novelists and their works.

The research review shows that Anita Desai's fiction has been explored with significant attention. But Shashi Deshpande's novels and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* have not yet received so much critical insight and research. It is quite acceptable that there is no full-length research on these three women novelists with reference to their vision and technique, used in depicting the state of man-woman relationship and the comparative study of these novelists in this regard. Anuradha Roy in her research work, *Patterns of Feminist Consciousness in Indian Women Writers* (1999) rightly observes:

“What is urgently required are more studies which would help to place each novelist in a comparative context. The similarities and differences in approach interest and intention have not been explored adequately.”¹⁷

1.8 Conclusion:

The civilization as portrayed by the three novelists is educated, materially advanced in terms of infrastructure and modern ness of living. But the ideas and values which they cherish and execute in their behaviour are traditional. This gap between culture and civilization gives rise to patriarchal male dominance and suffering of women due to it.

The study reveals that the family structure in Indian Society, as it is depicted by the novelists, is not integrated towards harmony, progress and peace. The disintegration is caused by the multiple factors. The chief factor is patriarchy. The parental engrossment and suffering leads to breakdown in their relationship which probably gives rise to their failure in maintaining parental duties. Consequently, the younger generation suffer due to the lack of socialization, acceptance of new ideas and planning. In the overall family

structure, women are the worst sufferers since they are subordinated, neglected and exploited by the ideological forces within and outside the family.

These women novelists follow the leftist tradition of Mulk Raj Anand for social change and adopt the mode of fiction writing as set by the western tradition of James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf.

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