Preface

Shashi Deshpande has emerged as one of the most accomplished novelists on the literary horizon of contemporary Indian English Literature. This literature originated around the middle of the nineteenth century as an offshoot of British Raj in India. In the pre-independence era, the Indian English fiction writers were mostly preoccupied with the nationalist and social themes and the theme of east-west encounter. After independence the tendency of the novelists has been to turn inwards and scrutinize the self and society. The modern novelists have explored the existential dilemma and problems like alienation, identity crisis, expatriation and a desire for recognition. A significant development of Indian English fiction in the last quarter of the twentieth century has been the emergence of several women novelists, who have won international acclaim by focusing their gaze on women’s issues. Shashi Deshpande is one such brilliant star in the galaxy of Indian women novelists in English. With her powerful novels on feminist concerns, she has become a major voice helping in women empowerment. Without much fanfare, always keeping a low profile, Shashi Deshpande is crusading through her novels against the unjust treatment meted out towards women in the male dominated society. Inspite of her vehement denial of being a feminist, Deshpande has been highlighting the disappointments and frustrations of women over the last three decades.

Shashi Deshpande's novels portray modern, educated, career oriented middle class married women, who are sensitive to the changing times and situations. Women, though an integral part of the society – constituting half of the population have been exploited and marginalised
down the ages. Today, they do not want to merely conform to male expectations, but have their own dreams and aspirations in their quest for self realization. The present study humbly endeavours to show that the novels of Shashi Deshpande are relevant in the present context as she depicts the quest for self. She is for the empowerment of women without preaching rebellion. Revealing a remarkable insight into the nature of a woman's psyche, she depicts women in myriad roles – wife, mother, daughter, but above all an individual. The best thing about Shashi Deshpande is that her protagonists are real and alive. They are common people whom we find all around us and with whom we can identify. The feelings and experiences depicted in her novels seem to be those of any reader as her major concerns emerge from our own world and environment. Shashi Deshpande's women remain within the family set-up as she does not advocate the conflict between the sexes, rather she urges for a more meaningful relation between them, which can only be achieved when the women's self is not thwarted. The progression of Deshpande's novels reflects, traces and captures the rapid social and cultural changes, which have been taking place in urban India as a result of swift economic development and expansion. So, Shashi Deshpande has not only depicted the individual's constant endeavour to 'live' life fighting against the odds, she has in fact truly portrayed human life itself.

The present work is divided into six chapters having self revealing titles. This study has been a truly rewarding experience. However, this would not have been possible without the grace of God and the blessings of elders as also and support of friends ..........

It is my utmost pleasure to express my deep sense of indebtedness and respect to my guide Pradeep Khare, Reader, Dept. of English,
K.S.Saket P.G.College, Faizabad (U.P.) for his invaluable guidance, constant encouragement and co-operative attitude. His inspiring and stimulating literary discussions, healthy criticism and monitoring of my research work, despite various odds, has enabled me to complete the present study.

I must acknowledge gratefully the blessings of my parents – Mr. Uma Shanker Verma, my father and Mrs. Prem Kumari, my mother – without their moral support, I could never have completed my research project. Among my well wishers I cannot forget to mention the name of Mr. Abhay Singh Rathore, an educationist and social activist of Hargaon, who inspired me at every step. I am also thankful to all my friends, colleagues and relatives for extending their support during the completion of the study.

I feel beholden to Dr. (Mrs.) Anjali Khare, Fzd. for her affectionate encouragement and patronage. I am deeply indebted to all the authors, whose works have been consulted by me and made use of, knowingly or unknowingly in carrying out this research work. I shall always be thankful to the librarians of the Sahitya Akademi Library, New Delhi; Delhi Public Library, Delhi; Tagore Library, Lucknow University, Lucknow and K.S.Saket P.G.College Library, Faizabad.

I would like to express my deep sense of devotion to the Almighty for his divine grace upon me in every sphere of my life. I do not have words to thank Him.

Kartik Poornima
2010

(Rama Singh)