CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

Postmodern in Indian English literature refers to the works of literature after 1980s. Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938) marks modernism, Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981) and Nissim Ezekiel’s poems (1982) mark postmodernism in Indian English literature. Of all the genres of Indian English literature, fiction is the most developed and well received one in the postmodern period both at home and abroad. With Arundhati Roy’s Booker Prize Award Winning Novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997), Indian English Novel has won international recognition. Earlier in the nineteen sixties and seventies, novelists like R.K. Naryan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Arun Joshi, Anita Desai and a few others won recognition both in India and at International level. But Indian novel could not attract the attention of readers in our country and abroad, the way it has done in the postmodern period. If Indian English poetry flourished in the mid-seventies, thanks to R. Parthasarathy (the then editor of Oxford University Press) who popularized it by publishing a number of Indian English poets and his most significant anthology titled, *Ten Twentieth Century Indian English Poets*, Indian English novel had its luxuriant growth in the hands of Amitay Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee,
Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Githa Hariharan, Mrinal Pande, Manju Kapur, Kiran Desai, Namita Gokhle, Salman Rushdi and a few others.

Postmodern Indian English fiction marks a departure from the earlier norms. One of the distinct characteristics of the postmodern Indian English fiction is the emergence of Indian Women novelists. Indian Women writers emerged after Independence and they have made a significant contribution. Fiction by women writers constitutes a major segment of the contemporary Indian writing in English. It provides insights, a wealth of understanding, a reservoir of meaning and a basis of discussion. Through women writer’s eyes we can see a different world, with their assistance we can seek to realize the potential of human achievement. In any appraisal of the Indian English literature, an appreciation of the writing of its women is essential.

Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sehgal, Shashi Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Gita Mehta and Arundhati Roy are but a few names of women who have distinguished themselves with their innovation style, depiction of social realities, advocacy of the emancipation of women and portrayal of feminine sensibilities. Some of them, like Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande, delve deep into the psyche of their characters to reveal various dimensions of their personalities,
while others, like Kamala Markandaya, show the socio-cultural realities that hamper the growth of women. If Nayantara Sehgal’s emphasis is on the political situation, that of Ruth Prawar Jhabvala is on the socio-cultural ethos. Shabha De and Namita Gokhale project a strong feminist view, while Kamala Das is frank about the depiction of women’s have rejuvenated the realistic novel by using it to explore and share their experience and put forward their own point of view on life, especially through their female characters with all their pain, agony, helplessness, exploitation and sufferings. Many of the Indian women novelists focus on women’s issues; they have a women’s perspective on the world. In fact, there has been a great need for and interest in works in the subject. There has emerged a new era of study and research as women’s studies. One of the reasons that women have, in such large number, taken up their pen is because it has allowed them to set the conditions of existence, free from the direct interference of men. Similarly, so many women have taken to reading women’s writing because it allows them a “safe place” from which they can explore a wide range of characters and a variety of existence. That is why women’s writing has occupied such a significant and central place in women’s lives. It is also why women’s writings can share much the same disparaged status as women in a world dominated by men.
The inclusion of women’s studies in the University curriculum is a step in the right direction. In male-dominated Indian society, woman is still a “second person”. No doubt a sizable section of society, especially elite class, makes no discrimination between the sexes. By and large, however, women do not enjoy an equal status with men. Even an educated, job-oriented woman can pursue a career only if she does not neglect her preordained domestic duty. Whether a woman is a scientist, doctor, lawyer, or artist, the discharge of her feminine duties must take priority. No wonder a married woman who takes her profession or academic career too seriously is frowned upon. And that is why many Indian women shun marriage, for they fear that it would stand in way of their success in their respective fields.

It is encouraging to note that women are entering the profession in a big way. Even a casual observation indicates that the jobs they are inclined to take up are secretarial, teaching, medicine and advertising. Of late, women have been accepting challenging tasks. They have entered the professions of engineering, architecture and journalism. In the present day literary world, there are several great creative women writers, in all Indian languages. And many of these writers have taken up issues related to the status of women in India that discrimination against women must stop, they plead. It is a question of asserting one’s identity, arousing a
public opinion, of channelizing will and motivation to influence the conscience of society. If a women is capable of making a mark in her profession, she should be recognized and treated as an equal. Moreover, the virtues associated with womanhood such as care, nurturing, sympathy, tolerance, compassion, etc. must enable an Indian woman to assert herself rather than enfeeble her in a patriarchal society.

For the women writers, writing is a form of self expression. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to make a perceptive analysis of Shashi Deshpande’s fiction to bring forth her concerns with women’s issue. There are women novelists who do not fictionalize only women’s problems or the troubled female psyche, they also hold a mirror to women’s reaction to men, society and vice versa. They discuss new themes, the complexities of the man-woman relationship and provide a penetrating analysis of the female world. Above all this new brigade of women novelists focus on establishing one of the most essential truth about human life—that woman must be treated like any other human, that she has the right to struggle for her identity, her image and she also need to be a little selfish in order to stay alive in this competitive world.

The novels written by women writers focus on women’s experiences as women in contemporary Indian society, which is a transitional phase-holding on to the traditional views, yet inclining-
towards the forces of modernity like globalization, materialism, consumerism, feminism. The objective of the present study is, therefore, to record the emerging female voice using the tenets of the new women centered psychologists. The terms ‘search for inner space’ has been used as the researcher aims at analyzing and examining the chosen fiction by Shashi Deshpande by using the criteria laid down by the prominent women critics, women scholars and feminists.

The emergence of gynofiction is a powerful global phenomenon. As it is based in a particular cultural, social, political and religious milieu, this fiction serves as an authentic mirror to the socio-cultural reality of the time. It acquires a special significance through the exploration of new dimensions of reality of the time. It acquires a special significance through the exploration of new dimensions of reality, and the changing role and status of women. Literature produced of late by Indian women has been trying to probe the problem of self definition faced by women in the traditional, patriarchal society, and in doing so, they have created the New Woman who does not negate her womanhood by imitating or rejecting the male, but is endeavouring to resolve the issue by reclaiming and redefining the positive aspects of womanhood. The present work also aims at understanding the women per se as it depicted in the fiction of the past eighties of twentieth century.
The present study examines the aspects of feminist concerns as found in the novels of Shashi Deshpande’s *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *That Long Silence, Small Remedies, Roots and Shadows* and *Moving on*. Her characters stand as spokespersons for the New Indian Woman. She may not be avowed feminist writer, but she is certainly interested in women’s experiences. Though Shashi Deshpande resents being labeled as a feminist writer, she agrees that she explores the “problems of being a women”.

Gynocriticism and psychoanalytical values such as care giving, empathy, affiliation, nurturing and a collective vision of social life to be central to the female experience, will be employed to find out as to how the new psychology challenges the traditional male idea of self in relationship. The concepts which are central to the works of Gilligan (*In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development*) Chodorow (*The Power of Feelings, Personal Meaning in Psychoanalysis, Gender and Culture* (1998) and *The Reproduction of Mothering* 1978), and Miller (*Towards a New Psychology of Women*) – Women’s relational sense of self, the relational path of women’s development and the importance of empathy or responsiveness in relationships would form the approach to the
Women have to face multiple problems in society, on the one hand, she is being treated as an idol, a Devi while at the same time birth of a daughter is considered misfortune to the extent that thousands of inborn daughters are killed in the womb of their mother. A woman with no male child has to face social stigma. Most of the Western literature, particularly literature produced during Augustan and Victorian depicts this discrepancy of society in tackling with the feminists issues. How can we expect equality in such situation? How can woman maintain her spirit and her zeal and enthusiasm to overcome various problems prevalent in society.

Feminist criticism is marked by the image of women in literature and its impact on the treatment to women in real life. Whether the both are interdependent on each other? The representation of women in positive and powerful image can bring change in the position and status of women in society. Feminism refuses the patriarchal theory that focuses on biological distinction between the men and women and make it a basic criteria to evaluate their personality and achievement. This is simply prejudiced and lopsided approach. Literature produced before 1960s primarily depicted women under the impression of this prejudice whether they reflected the position of women in society or they aimed at realist
portrayal of real life situation? But the last quarter of twentieth century witnessed major changes in the images of women in literature, corresponding with the rise of women writers.

The term ‘Gynocriticism’ coined by Elain Showalter (1986 : 128-129) looks at gender from a socio-cultural angle. The gynocritics believe that while sex is a biological construct, gender is a social and cultural construct. The biological distinction between men and women does not necessarily imply that they are unequal, and woman is certainly inferior to man. Elaine Showalter writes that the term ‘gyno-criticism’ relates to the scholarship concerned with woman as the producer of textual meaning; with the history, themes, genres and structures of literature by women…. gynocriticism is more self-contained and experimental (23). Feminist literary criticism is primarily a response to the way woman presented in literature by male writers from their own point of view, which is known as phallocentrism, and the woman presented in the writings of female writers from their view-point, which gives rise to ‘gynocriticism’.

Showalter writes “If we study stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics and the limited roles women play in literary history, we are not learning what women have felt and experienced, but only what men have thought women should be.”(13) It is, thus, obvious that gynocritics
seek to read the male created texts and female-created texts to produce a literary category called ‘women-centered criticism; it highlights the female experience, rather than adopt male models and theories.’

Feminism as a political belief and ideology came into inception in the last quarter of 17th century, but feminist criticism is of recent origin. The year 1968 marked by the publication of TorilMoi’s Sexual, Textual Politics which stands as a landmark in feminist criticism as it is regarded as the first ever systematically published treatise on feminist criticism. With the publication of Sexual, Textual Politics women begin to think for themselves as "feminist critics", approaching literature with both a political perspective formed by the women's liberation movement and a training in the contemporary institutions of literary study”. (Showalter:179). The development of political group in Paris, Lyons and Toulouse played a decisive role in the movement and tradition of feminist criticism. It generated the desire to acquire the freedom of thought and intellectual development. Helen Cixous and the psychoanalyst Antoinette Fouque provided fresh and invigorating critical ideas to the lead, British and American woman thinkers and writers followed it with great enthusiasm and the followers surpassed the leader. The French government and universities' non-cooperation in promoting Feminist studies proved the biggest obstacle. Whereas British and American
government promoted this cause by sanctioning huge grants and providing financial assistance to set up feminist studies departments in the colleges and universities by opening up bookstores and publication houses which publish solely the manuscripts of women writers and poets. This step became necessary as it was revealed that in the countries where women enjoy control over the publication facility they express themselves more freely. Thus early 70s witnessed the emergence of Feminist Press in US and France.

The beginning of American feminism is marked around 1960s the publication of "The Feminine Mystique" by Betty Friedan. But then the first systematic effort in the direction to analyse the literary aspects was made by Kate Millet with her epoch making work Sexual Politics. Through her work she has revealed the male criteria of expressing women as dependent on men even for gratification of their basic desires. In Sexual Politics, Kate Millet has taken up three issues (i) Sexual Politics (ii) Historical Background (iii) The Literary Reflection. In the first part she has described how sex has been a neglected aspect and in the patriarchal system the male novelists have presented women as just recipient of sex, mere puppets with no desires of their own. She has taken excerpts from the works of D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer and Jean Genet. Through minutely examined pieces, she has established a
theory that is in sheer contrast with the views of the author and which "exposes the underlying premises of a work". (Moi: 25)

She also acquired huge popularity as she refused to sway with popular belief and for the first time she feels that readers’ viewpoint might be totally different from the viewpoint of the author and none has the right to challenge it. Following this viewpoint, she has exposed the sexuality in male minds.

Toril Moi appreciates her revolutionary approach and writes that "her approach destroys the prevailing image of the reader/critic and passive/ feminine recipient of authoritarian discourse and as such is exactly suited to feminism's political purposes". (Moi: 25) In Kate Millet's Sexual Politics she takes up examples from their texts as evidence to establish the male politics to keep themselves in the center and she scornfully mocks at their sick mentality to deprive them from their rightful existence. While clarifying the notion of sexual politics she poses a question "can the relationship between the sexes be viewed in a political light at all" (Millet, 22) she further formulates the argument that Sexual Politics refers to power structure between male and female. It refers to a social arrangement or system or tradition that provides rights to a person, conferred by birth to control the thoughts and activities of another person again due to birth in a special sex. This policy establishes
the relation of master subject, ruler ruled between man and woman. She believes that the social system and norms support the practice of male dominance over female and then elder male dominates and suppress younger male.

Kate Millet observes that the distinction between male and female is socially constructed and gets clearly reflected in the different roles provided to them by the society. The temperament, role and status of male and female are the main constants of sexual politics. In this regard she further observes that:

Temperament, involves the formation of human personality along stereotyped lines of sex category (masculine" and "feminine"). Based on the needs and values of the dominant group and dictated by what its member cherish in themselves and find it convenient in subordinates: aggression, intelligence, force and efficacy in the male; passivity, ignorance, docility, "virtue", and ineffectuality in the female.... In terms of activity, sex role assign domestic service and attendance upon infants to the female, the rest of human achievement, interest and ambition to the male. The limited role allotted the female tends to arrest her at the level of biological experience. (26)
Thus as per the views of Kate Millet quoted above this is clearly evident that the societal force determine the 'masculine' or 'feminine' tendencies in people and further it is the society that dictates its norms in the form of expectations from both the sexes. The parents family members peer groups' and friends' perception directly or indirectly persuades a Child to behave in a certain manner. As a result we get modified and controlled unnatural behaviour. Again the exposure and range of experiences, education etc. determine the knowledge level of an individual and as women have very limited access to these, they find it difficult to develop their potentialities to the highest level. They were regarded as inferior beings and were treated scornfully as if they are deprived of mental and intellectual powers. She discusses that: "Woman is still denied sexual freedom and the biological control over her body through the cult of virginity, the double standard", (Millett54) Be it fiction or poetry, any genre of literature carry abundant instances of sexual politics, which depict them as weak, submissive and parasite like creature. In most of the Elizabethan literature women were portrayed as creatures with physical beauty but no brain or intelligence. Beauty is their greatest weapon and thus there are very few memorable characters. In Restoration age, women were treated with shallow greetings, and scant respect. Their main occupation was to beautify them and their prime concern was to attract wealthy and handsome men. Romantic literature is
totally deprived of women with their individual identity. In fact, Romantic poets tarnish their image upto a great extent. They portray women as fickle minded, shallow, weak, malicious, opportunist and treacherous character. They generally supply the background and if they ever find independent representation (Solitary Reaper, La Belle Dam Sans Mercy) they appear merely as pathetic creatures.

Yet the first ever published book on Feminism "Vindication of the Rights of Women" was published in 1792. Gradually suffrage movement started in various parts of USA, France and U.K, and women in large numbers started joining it. Feminist criticism is marked by the image of women in literature and its impact on the treatment to women in real life. Whether the both are related to each other? Or the representation of women in positive and powerful image can bring any change in their position in society. Feminism refuses the patriarchal theory that focuses on biological distinction between the men and women and make it a basic criteria to evaluate their personality and achievement. This is simply prejudiced and lopsided approach. Literature produced before 1960s primarily depicted women under the impression of this prejudice whether they reflected the position of women in society or they aimed at realist portrayal of real life situation? But the last quarter of twentieth
century witnessed major changes in the images of women in literature, corresponding with the rise of women writers. With this emerged a new group of intellectuals who advocated the belief that it is not biological differences but psycho-social differences and the method to nurture the children of different sexes, which in later life play detrimental role in shaping the personality of children. They also reject the existence of any such temperamental distinction as 'feminine' and 'masculine' which were earlier regarded as most significant reference point in labeling the women as inferior being. It is now believed to be the result of the upbringing. Yet this vision and changed outlook is confined only up to liberal upper class society and the position of women is almost pathetic in lower and middle class, that still treat them as inferior to men Kate Millet writes in this regard:

"As woman in patriarchy are for the most part marginal citizens when they are citizens at all their situation is like that of other minorities, here defined not as dependent upon numerical size of the group, but on its status". (55)

Being treated as minority and marginal class the inferiority complex creeps naturally in her that further generates "group
self-hatred and self rejection, a contempt both for herself and for her fellows". (56) Despite much advancement of technology, economy and education in India, women are still at margin. The rural, uneducated woman is the weakest segment of society. In the power polities they are even inferior to Dalits as they are totally “excluded from the privileges accorded to dominant and economically and socially more privileged groups”. (Vashishtha 2004, 100) Political parties favour the Dalits influence the polities, and announce various schemes for their welfare but as women are still disunited force, no such privilege is provided to them. Vashishta writes in this regard “women in India are in this sense subalterns who have been requested to the domestic sphere and excluded from public life and consequently from the decision making political processes, both within the local community as well as within the home”. (2004, p. 100) Feminist writers have vehemently criticized the negation of woman i.e. female experience in hegemonic literature. They object to women’s merely playing the roles handed over to them by patriarchy N. Geetha writes:
Women are usually cast into a few popular stereotypes of a narrow range of characterization. There are two basic types of images: positive roles, which depict women as independent, intelligent and even heroic and a surplus of misogynistic roles commonly identified as the bitch, the witch, the vamp and the virgin/goddess (Geetha 1994:61).

According to the gynocritics, women weave into the fictional world of their creation their myriad conflicts and live experiences. Sodhi writes that in their writings, men portray women as they want them to be “for it is not possible for men to express life otherwise than as they know it, which again is according to their own experience (1999:82).” The gynocritical scholarship such as Jyoti Singh even quotes Vivekanand to illustrate their point of view. She writes “Swami Vivekanand, when questioned about the women of India at Shakespeare Club in Pasadena, California on 18 January 1900, spoke about the ideals of Indian womanhood, at the same time humbly admitting that he found his knowledge of Indian women not to be so complete (2007:08).” Prof. Avadhesh Kumar also supports the view when he writes, “Only she, not he, knows what she experiences, so only she can speak of it.” These critics argue that a woman in male writings is portrayed as an angel,
tolerant, passive and sacrificing. The male writings denounce and
denigrate a woman if she fails to walk on the chalked path. Even in the
verbal praise, these critics say, is hidden the actual relegation of woman
to the secondary position. The male writings are, thus, a portrayal of these
women stereotypes. These gynocritical voices, therefore, claim to read
and focus on women writers and fictional women in literature so as to
delve deep into the woman psyche.

It would be worth mentioning here the views of the American
school of is based on psychoanalytic mode of feminist criticism. The
school is popularized by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, who have
based their judgment on a thorough analysis of the images of female
characters in the works of prominent English women writers including
Bronte Sisters, Jane Austen, Mary Shelley and George Eliot. These critics
describe that the sole mark of identity for these women lie in the feminine
utopia of wholeness, rather than in other man (Singh:19). Besides, the
French critics like Heline Cixous, Julia Kristeva, Lucy Irigaray and the
British psychoanalytic critics Jacqualine Rose and Juliet Mitchell have
also made significant contribution to the field.

Feminism commensurate with cultural exigencies was accepted by
India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh in two South Asian Workshops,
Bhasin and Khan define this feminism as “an awareness of women’s
oppression and exploitation in society, at the place of work and within the family, and conscious action to change this situation (2003).” The other definition given by the same authors says:

Feminism is an awareness of patriarchal control, exploitation and oppression at the material and ideological level of women’s work and in society in general and conscious action by women and men to transform the present situation (2003).

It is thus clear that any person whether male or female, who recognizes the presence of sexism, male dominance, patriarchy and resists it and takes action against it, is a feminist. It is this definition which was duly considered at the time of the initiation of this work.

Feminism, as a cultural ideology, originated in the 17th Century. The writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, especially A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and that of Simon de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex gave it a further impetus. In 1867 J.S. Mill in his The Subjection of Women, demanded equality for women and pleaded strongly for their voting right. Women were conferred upon the right to vote in Britain in 1918 and in America in 1920. The right to vote brought about an awareness among the women and they became daring to demand right to employment, property etc. Rama Mehta says, “It gave way to a new awakening and
they demanded right to divorce, employment, property, the main thing being to have control on one’s body (1987:29).”

Feminists believe that empathy, nurturing, subservience and tolerance are the stereotypes, very often made to go with womanhood. This they hold, is done to relegate woman’s status in favour of man in the patriarchal set up. A woman’s identity, according to them, does not lie in the virtues such as devotion, love, care, tolerance, generosity etc. A woman in the patriarchal set up is conditioned to assimilate these virtues. The parameters of a woman being virtuous or vicious lie in how much sacrifice she can make for the welfare and development of the other members of her family. They are supposed to care for the male members so that they may create history and achieve success.

Early feminists mainly Mary Wollstonecraft roused women to the understanding of this condition. She suggested that a woman, in order to liberate herself from the confines of a patriarchal society, should behave. She wrote “I presume that rational men will excuse me for endeavouring to persuade women to become more masculine and respectable (Wollstone Craft 1962:83).” Simon de Beauvior in her The Second Sex argues that women depend upon men; this dependence is not a natural or biological construct but they are conditioned to it through the social traditions of the patriarchal set up. She says that women can claim equality to men or they
will be able to claim equality only when they escape from the traditional feminine world (Beauvoir, 1997:690). Eva Figes argues that women have to come out of their apparent passivity and have to rise in rebellion to put an end to the discrimination meted out to them (1978:7). Merilyn French says that feminism is not only a political movement demanding access to the rewards and responsibilities of the male world; it is also a revolutionary moral movement, which aim at using political power to transform society to feminize it (1985:443). Betty Friedan in her classic text *The Feminine Mystique* argues that a woman in no way even dream about herself, except as her children’s mother, and her husband’s wife due to her long apprenticeship in gender roles (1992:55). A woman can attain personal fulfillment only by aiming at an access to the male world. Germaine Greer considers marriage as the chief cause of a woman’s helplessness and oppression (1999:53).

The feminist agenda as stated above underwent a change with the feminists of 1960s reverting back to the pro-family stance. Juliet Mitchell also says that the pro-family feminism of the 1980s, in which the writers such as Betty Friedan and Germaine Greer appear to change their minds and tell us we got it all wrong (1986:4). Betty Friedan wrote in her *The Second Stage* “It is a serious error to adopt male model of careerism and success as female goals at the cost of women’s needs for intimacy, family
and children (Singh 2007:22).” Germaine Greer, in her *Sex* and *Destiny* contradicts her previous statement and adopts a pro-family perspective. She writes “The most valuable commodity in the family is a loving heart where happiness consists in seeing others happy.” These two books, which were condemned as a betrayal of the feminist cause strike a balance by considering the gender differentiation and also celebrating the traditional feminine qualities associated with mothering.

Today, the feminist view as held by Simon de Beauvoir and Wollstonecraft, has undergone a change. The stereotypically masculine is no longer accepted as a yardstick of virtue. It is no longer considered necessary by the feminist critics that it is through attaining the same situation as men’s that women will find emancipation. It is not accepted any longer that certain set of characteristics are women-specific whereas another set of characteristics is man-specific. They believe that “both men and women can have or develop the ‘masculine’ qualities (strength, bravery, dominance, competitiveness etc.) and the so called feminine qualities (caring, northing; love, timidity, obedience, etc.). These are human qualities and not specific to either men or women (Basin and Khan, 2000:28).”

As a matter of fact, femininity or masculinity is the result of gendering. This ‘gendering’ is a matter of culture. The excellent qualities
such as mothering, caring, nurturing, tolerance are not practiced by men; they devalue them for power and success. It is the patriarchal get up which has made men hard and harsh by denying him the opportunity to nurture and care. The requirement of the time, therefore, is that men and women should share the positive feminine and masculine qualities and that everyone should be gentle, caring, nurturing, strong, rational, emotional and individualistic.

Globalization has encouraged the emergence of feminist literature as a powerful sub-genre. The feminist literature depicts the socio-culture reality of the time as it is based on the unique experience of its women writers. The study of feminist literature acquires special significance because it acquaints us with the merging dimension of the change such as the changing role and status of women. In the present day Indian context, when the impact of globalization is being felt strongly, the response to feminism has been varied. The Indian feminist literature of the global era has been trying hard to find a solution to the problem of self-definition faced by women in the traditional patriarchal set up. The probe of Indian gynofiction writers has culminated into the creation of a New Woman who does not undermine or negate her womanhood by simply imitating or rejecting the male but resolves the issue by redefining the positive
aspects of womanhood. It is this aspect of gynocriticism that helps one understand “The genuine woman-self.”

Feminist literature views gender as a socio-culturally determined behavior. According to the gynocritics, sex is a biological construct, whereas gender is a social and cultural construct. It is thus clear that men and women are biological different. It, however, does not mean that they are unequal. In the chapters that follow we shall endeavour to examine the aspects of the women centred approaches in relation to Shashi Despande’s *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980).

It is likely for one, especially a male, to be misunderstood while working upon such an enterprise. One may be termed as prejudiced or possessing a gendered vision (in case of a male, a male chauvinist etc.) which perpetuates a gendered vision rather than eliminates it. The difference in gender makes men and women adopt different characteristics and modes of temperament. Virginia Woolf, commenting on the difference between male and female writers, says

> It is probable, however, that both in life and in art, the values of women are not the values of a man. Thus when woman comes to write a novel, she will find that she is perpetually wishing to alter the established values-to make serious what
appears insignificant to a man and trivial what is to him important (Woolf, 1975:81).

Anita Desai’s views are also in consonance with that of Virginia Woolf. She says that the sentimentality and rationality of the writer is bound to determine the tone and texture of art. This is obvious also from the feminine sensibility present in the work of women writers.

Feminist literature considers the vital change occurring in the traditional stereotype relationship between man and woman due to the advent of globalization. Technological advancement has made it quite easy for a woman to enjoy motherhood without undergoing much pain. Moreover, the task of caring is not the sole responsibility of the mother. It is equally shared by the father now. The equal job opportunities available to women have made them come out from the confines of traditional patriarchal society.

The feminists believe that woman has already proved that she is in no way less than man and she can compete with man in every field. It is now man’s turn to learn to develop respect and esteem for women’s moral goodness, nurturing and caring. Men and women should complement and complete each other.

**Emerging Women-Centered Psychological Works:**
The Wellesley Centre for women and Stone Centre are the two research centers which have been a driving force in promoting a positive change for women. The psychologists and scholars associated with these centers have found care giving and allied values such as empathy, affiliation, nurturing and a collective vision of social life to be central to the female experience. These psychologists do not approve the traditional male idea of self-in-relationship. Judith Jordan, Alexander G. Kaplan, Jean Baker Mill, Irene P. Stiver, Janet L. Surrey, Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan are the prominent scholars belonging to the centre.

Jean Baker Miller who is a clinical professor of psychiatry at Boston University of Medicine’s work *Towards a New Psychology of Women* is the single most influential work of the Stone Centre, on which the other members also base their arguments. In her book *Towards a New Psychology of Women*, she says

At times our ideas flow from the interactions amongst us, so that it would be inappropriate to say that an idea ‘belonged’ to any one person. The idea becomes enlarged and transformed in interchange so that it is not what it was when it began and it is truly everyone’s creation. On other points we do not think alike and we keep struggling to honour these differences (Miller, 1987: XXXIII).
In her book she emphasizes that ‘care’ is the important ingredient in developing a new understanding of woman. She argues that it is necessary to develop a new language and new concepts to describe women’s experience. She also points out that problems arise when the principles of male development are cast as universal principles of human development. She is of the view that a thorough understanding of human development can be arrived at only through complete elucidation of both male and female experience, she writes:

Humanity has been held to a limited and distorted view of itself from its interpretation of the most intimate of personal emotions to its grandest visions of human possibilities-precisely by virtue of its subordination of women. Until recently mankind’s understandings have been the only understandings generally available to us. As other perceptions arise-precisely those perceptions that men because of their dominant position could not perceive-the total vision of human possibilities enlarges and is transformed. The old is severely challenged (Miller, 1976:1).

Carol Gilligan, Professor of gender studies at Harvard University’s book In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development is a ground breaking work. The book has been translated into thirteen languages. The observations recorded in the book are based
on empirical researches. She argues that male morality has a ‘justice orientation’ whereas female morality has a responsibility orientation. She is of the view that psychology has systematically misunderstood women and development theories revolve around men’s live.

Nancy Julia Chodorow’s *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) is another milestone work. She notes that our child rearing method is such that it produces a requirement for connectedness in female children and separation in male children. The male child’s initial identification with the mother is replaced by identification with the socially accepted male status and role. This identification makes the boys more detached and the girls emotionally dependent and exploitable. Naturally, the girls’ identification with their mother culminates into the need of ‘mother’. In her another very important book *The Power of Feelings, Personal Meaning in Psychoanalysis, Gender and Culture* (1999) she argues that feminists, anthropologists and cultural theorists positions, propositions and concepts have made it mandatory for the psychoanalysts to take the cultural meanings seriously as they help constitute psychic life and throw light on the variable forces of individual and cultural forms in the construction of feminism.

Jean Baker Miller in ‘*Toward a New Psychology of Women*’ (Miller, 1976:83) argues that women embrace a different approach to
living, which more than self-enhancement. Women merge their selves in the services of home, husband and children; it is on them that they rest their sense of identify and value. The take up the responsibility of home and hearth and this blocks their self-enhancement. Nancy Chodorow in her *The Reproduction of Mothering* questions the role of woman as a mother associated with the virtues of care, nurturing, tolerance, empathy, self-denial etc. She also questions the presumption of the naturalness of women’s capacity to rear children, which is based on the fact that biologically, women ‘mother’. According to Chodorow, the reproduction of mothering, i.e. the reproduction of the ability to care and nurture, is cyclical. She writes:

Women, as mother produce daughters with mothering capacities and the desire to mother. These capacities and needs are built into and grow out of the mother-daughter relationship itself. By contrast, women as mothers (and men as not-mothers) produce sons whose nurturing capacities and needs have been systematically curtailed and repressed (Chodorow, 1978:7).

It is, thus, the conditioning provided to the boys and girls that they inhabit different emotional environments. Gilligan in her *In a Different Voice* also writes:
Women’s deference is rooted not only in their social subordination, but also in the substance of their moral concern, sensitivity to the needs of the others and the assumption of responsibility for taking care lead women to attend to voices other than their own and to include in their judgment others point of view. Women’s moral weakness, manifest in an apparent diffusion and confusion in judgment, is thus inseparable from women’s moral strength, an overriding concern with relationships and responsibilities (Gilligon 1982:17).

As a matter of fact, in the male-dominated society, stress is always put on girls imbibing the feminine virtues. The boys are the persons performing the risk activities. This is how women are made to look inferior. This generates within women a sense of inferiority and dejection. This factual position gives rise to the questions such as “If a society devalues women’s work of status, how can it arouse in them the feeling of theirs being the valuable members?” Answer to this question makes us reach a better understanding of women.

Women are reduced to the status of caretakers and nurturers. Their ‘selves’ i.e. identify is determined by the dominant culture asserted by men. This makes the women dependent and subordinate to men. Their
subordinate position breeds among the women discontent. This leads to conflict situation. If the women do not accept the existing value system dictated and designed by male counterpart and take to protest and rebellion, they are termed as misfits who are on the way to diminish the masculine value system. Pointing towards this state of women, Miller writes:

How can women’s pursuits to realize their self, which is a basic human right, be destructive to other? Most probably, the reason lies in the feeling that if women concentrate on other than organizing their lives around giving and caring, the needs of men and children would be affected. Women, too, have traditionally built a sense of self-worth on activities that they can manage to define as taking care of and giving to other (1976:53).

Women do not want conflict because it creates difficulty for them, difficulty in adjustment and adaptation which are supposed the keys to ideal womanhood. Woman, as they are the suppressed, powerless and dependent group, do not give voice to their conflict or protest. Gilligan also notes:

The notion that virtue for women lies in self-sacrifice has complicated the course of women's development by putting
the moral issue of goodness against the adult questions of responsibility and choice (1882:132).

Thus, it is obvious that the scholarship associated with woman centered psychology is of the view that the virtues of womanhood become the tools of their exploitation and subservience. Miller writes “The only form of affiliation that have been available to women are subservient affiliation (1976, 89).” A woman internalizes the feminine virtue of subservient affiliations and it therefore, becomes difficult for a woman to relinquish the idea of disruption of affiliation.

Indian cultural legacy makes the things more complicated; it prescribes a separate religion and caste for women, known as ‘Stridharma’ and ‘Strijati’. Indian women are always trained to follow the timeless feminine symbols of Indian womanhood like Sita and Savitri. The customary segregation of sexes in Indian culture prescribes different codes of masculine and feminine behavior. As a result, it becomes difficult to liberate the mind from the set shackles of prejudices which idealize female martyrdom and self-denying women.

A large number of women writers like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Attia Husain, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy etc. have portrayed new women who are no more ready to bear the torchers and torments by the society in submissive manners. The present research
work traces the aspects of feminist criticism in Shashi Deshpande’s *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980), *That Long Silence, Moving On* and *Small Remedies* in accordance with the criteria laid down by the prominent women critics, women scholars and feminists.(2000) It will be better to end the chapter with a clarification. The present work should not be misunderstood as the objective is not to provide or add to the existing feminist criticism but simply to interpret the various gynocritical aspects as stipulated by Gilligan, Chodorow, Miller, Simon de Beauvoir, Juliet Mitchell, Hillary Rose, Elain Showalter, Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf, etc by applying them to some representative works of Shashi Deshpande, one of the famous postmodern Indian woman novelist.

**Review of Literature**

There is no dearth of critical studies which explore feministic trends in the fictional works written by Indian Women. The Indian women novelists have used fiction to explore and share their experiences. The myriad conflicts, which they face in everyday lives, are woven into the fictional would of their creation. Meena Sodhi in her *Indian English Writing* (1999 : 82) writes “In their writings, men portray women as they want them to be for it is not possible for men to express life otherwise than as they know it, which again is according to their own experience”. Swami Vivekanand, when questioned about the women of India at the
Shakespeare Club in Pasadena, California, on 18\textsuperscript{th} January, 1990, spoke about the ideals of Indian womanhood, at the same time humbly admitting that he found his knowledge of Indian women “not to be so complete” (Vivekanand, 1992: 52). Therefore, Avadhesh Kumar Singh rightly says in Indian Feminism “Only she, not he, knows what she experiences, so only she can speak of it.” (Jain and Singh, 2001 : 119).

Very often we find the fictional woman in male writing portrayed as shrew or an angel, tolerant, passive and sacrificing. If women retaliate or fail to walk the chalked path, they are denounced for what Kudchekar in his article \textit{Feminist Literary Criticism: The Ground Work} writes. “All cultures claim to praise and value the womanly quality. One can cite an equal number of passages denigrating women, while the verbal praise mars the actual relegation to the secondary position.” (31)

The gynocritical approach endeavours to read and focus on women writers and fictional women in literature to reach the authentic female voices and dive deep into their psychology. The present work aims at bringing out the dissonance between Shashi Deshpande’s women characters, their voices and their efforts to establish their identity and restoring happiness in their conjugal relations. Thus it becomes important in one’s understanding of women’s development and the development of harmony in the family relations.
Relevance of the Study

In Indian Culture, the segregation of the sexes is customary. The masculine and feminine codes of behaviour prescribed in the religious texts are literally revered and to liberate the mind from the shackles of the accepted prejudices is not easy, for it is deeply fabricated in the Indian ethos. Our culture idealizes female martyrdom and self denying women are extolled in the various myths, that constitute a part of the Indian cultural legacy. There is a separate religion and caste for women, i.e. the Stridharma and the Strijati. Women are conditioned and brought up through the examples of timeless feminine symbols of Indian Womanhood like Sita and Savitri. Thus, she is an idol of compassion and care. However, for the good and advancement of mankind, women should be allowed to develop their authentic self. All should realize the universality of the need of compassion and care. Restructuring of relationship is the need of the hour. Women should be able to draw strength from their relationship and craft a way of life that includes serving others without being subservient. The purpose of this study is to depict the efforts of Shashi Deshpande to portray empowered Indian woman, to move away from our stereotypical traditional notions that need to be redefined to create a better world based on equality.
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