Review of Literature

The previous researches carried out on Indian women novelists and especially on Shashi Deshpande touch one theme or the other in their research papers, the researches done earlier show that still so many other aspects of feminism have not been picked up and explored. Although there are some researches which are quite significant as they extend their horizon and take initiative to include multifarious themes of feminism yet the number of such is quite less. Hence there is still a gap in the previous research done which can be noticed with the review of these following papers:

Anita Desai and Virginia Woolf both are acclaimed writers, writing with a aim. Virginia is quite famous for her fondness for the technique of Stream of consciousness which she perfected even. She wrote her famous books *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway* using this technique in order to render full justice to the portrayal of her women characters. Her women characters as well as male characters are always the product of their mental processes. Similarly Anita Desai uses the techniques to portray her women characters in all her major novels although her subject matter is essentially feminine but the psychological realism is as potent weapon in her hands as in Mrs. Woolf.¹

This paper studies feminism in Shashi Deshpande’s novel *Roots and Shadows*. Feminism is the call of revolt against any form of injustice being meted out to women. Indian women novelists had to strive hard in order to carve a niche for themselves. Their writing projects the inferior treatment which a woman is destined to have. They try hard to awake the society from slumber.²

Although the present paper studies feminism in three novels of Deshpande i.e. *That Long Silence, The Dark Hold No Terrors* and *Roots and Shadow*, it does not bring before us the various aspects of feminism, on the contrary talks of feminism and places Deshpande in it. Indian feminism is a typical reply to the overpowering trials that Indian women are faced with. Indian feminism should never be considered as a mere imitation of western concept of feminism rather it’s a feminism of its own type. There are three types of women in her novels. One who are victims of patriarchy but still believe that their tradition and cultural values cannot bestow them with the right to rebel against the males who are their husband or father. Their cultural set up expects from them that they should be servile and subordinate to their husbands however bad
their plight may be. The second kind is that of western feminist ideology of radical sort who is bold and self-assertive and believes that no traditional code is for any use. The third kind is typical of Shashi Deshpande who is not even ready to throw the traditional set up to winds nor even is of radical feminist type rather she chooses a middle path who questions the age old values which suppress her and seek her own identity in the new world.  

What a sad plight of women, being painted in Mahasweta Devi’s stories. ‘Draupdi’ is a tribal woman who is declared wanted. She is caught, abused, beaten and raped for many days but she is a strong woman who meets her oppressor confidently although in a stark naked position. The Breast giver is another story where she depicts the courage of a lady who is appointed as a wet nurse to breast feed the rich new born babies. This way she fends for herself and for her family, ultimately falling a prey to deadly disease cancer. Ironical enough no one of his sons whom she breast fed attends her funeral. Woman’s life can be so tough full of difficult situations, poverty and misery, is the story line of ‘Rudali’, whose mother dies, husband is drunkard and son is a mischief monger.

Shobha De’s Second Thought presents beautifully the failed expectations of a lady Maya. She marries Ranjan as she is fascinated by the prospects of settling down in Bombay, the city she loved. But the days after her marriage bring the bleak reality before her. She is aroused from her slumber when she comes to know that Ranjan had sex even before marriage and that he married her only to satisfy her mother.

Human relationship especially that of man-woman relationship is the favourite of Shashi Deshpande who picks up this time and again in her novels and Binding Vine again exhibits the same fondness for this theme. The institution of marriage stands questioned, the very validity of it is shaken. Men objectify women and assault them sexually not only physically but even mentally both in marriage and outside. Even the inner most feelings of women like Urmi in terms of their sexual feelings have been pointed out clearly.

This paper studies Shashi Deshpande and Anita Nair’s feminism comparatively. Both writers are acclaimed and express feminine sensibility. Shashi Deshpande and Anita Nair both have articulated the problems of Indian women as they are trapped between their traditional and modern roles. Both writers have expressed the concern with which the women are conditioned
right from the beginning of their birth. They are told that the ultimate aim of their life is to find a suitable match and get married. They are made to feel that their attributes are docility, humbleness and servility. Thus they are forced to assimilate their inferior roles gradually. Novels by both writers are a study in gender discrimination and husband wife relationship. The paper fails as it does not deal with the various aspects of female subjugation.\(^7\)

The present paper dwells on the theme of female identity which is somewhere lost when a woman gets married in Indian scenario, the epitome of it being Jaya, the protagonist of the novel That Long Silence. She marries Mohan and after seventeen years of her married life fails to recognize her own self as she has been transformed; a metamorphosis which was so spontaneous that she sacrificed her own wills and likes for the sake of her family citadel. Family being her first priority she did everything that she is expected to do. The paper traces how eventually she is able to search for her female identity.\(^8\)

Rama Mehta’s novel Inside the Haveli is studied from the feminist perspective in this present paper. Geeta, the female protagonist, is the one who tries to search her own identity. She feels caged within the four walls of the big haveli which subjects her to docility; quitting her own female self. The novel is about how Geeta abridges the cleavage between traditionalism and modernity; ultimately finding her true identity.\(^9\)

The paper describes what the word feminism stands for. Feminism is derived from the Latin word ‘femina’ which implies woman. Hence feminism is related to the issues and problems which women face. The paper traces the advent of feminism in general and that of India in particular. Pre -Independent India saw the onset of feminism which even in post-independence kept its efforts intact to gain freedom for women.\(^10\)

Rural and urban middle class women both are victims in the male society. They are mute sufferers. This paper offers a comparative analysis of Nectar in A Sieve and That Long Silence. The unabated pain that they are made to bear is the result of the andro-centric society which tries to form their norms in a way that women can always be subordinated to men. But in the end both the novelist show the seeds of revolt or objection which is the beginning of new feminist thought.\(^11\)
Indu the female protagonist in the novel *Roots and Shadows* is in search of her female identity. She exerts to find her identity as she feels that her feminine self is quite lost. The paper tries to deal with the various situations where Indu finds herself trapped and displays the assertion of Indu’s feminist awakening by various examples. Indu is able to find her identity, her roots in the end by the realization that it is Jayant, her husband, where she actually belongs to and she can never escape from that.\(^{12}\)

Manju Kapur’s novels *Difficult Daughters, Home, A Married Woman, The Immigrant, The Custody* are known to have feminist concerns. The paper not only describes Kapur’s brand of feminism rather also describes the movement feminism and its growth in the Indian context.\(^{13}\)

Shahsi Deshpande’s female protagonists use writing as a means to express their pent up feelings and to relieve themselves. Almost each of her novels deals with the theme of writing as an aid to unburdening the soul. For instance Mira in *The Binding Vine* is a very promising author. Mira records the harrowing details of how she was brutally raped within the institution of marriage and how her very creative impulse was thwarted. Sumi in *A Matter of Time* take to writing after Gopal’s walking out on him. She writes a play *The Gardener’s Son* which becomes an instant hit. The same can be seen in other plays of Deshpande too i.e. *Moving On* and *Small Remedies*.\(^{14}\)

Only those girls are desired and appreciated by parents who conform to the modes of the society, hence the title of Bharathi Mukherjee’s *Desirable Daughters* is justified. Girls are expected to betray the feminine features of docility, beauty and intelligence which the society desires the most. Three sisters Padma, Parvati and Tara break the traditional bounds of the society hence they cease to be the desirable daughters. A fine study in the problems of women, the novels brings forth the problems of child marriage and imposed marriage too.\(^{15}\)

*Silence! The Court is in Session* by Vijay Tendulkar is a marvelous reading in feminism. The play satires the male chauvinists who are ever ready to accuse women and to punish them but are quite silent regarding to the crimes which men commit. Mrs. Banare is framed for having illicit relationship with Prof Damle but he is free and no one dares to question him.\(^{16}\)

Kamala Markandaya is a feminist to the core and feminist voice can be heard in almost each of her work. *Nectar in a Sieve* portrays the character of Rukmani who faces all odds with great fortitude. Urbanization and industrialization play havoc with her life and she is forced to starve
with her family. Her daughter throws all moral restrictions to the wind and takes to prostitution in order to save her brother from starvation. There is a constant and incessant search for identity in Markandaya’s female protagonists.\textsuperscript{17}

The impact of cultural differences can be so alarming that can be seen in the case of Jemubhai. Being a retired judge, it is so stunning that he is habitual of beating his wife brutally. The reason is he himself fell a prey to the cultural differences in England where he was sent for higher study. His throat would generally choke as no one liked him and talked to him as he was from India, a country they detest. His wife, to him, reminds him of India and the pain that he suffered being an Indian so he develops his inferiority complex and hates anything Indian.\textsuperscript{18}

The story by Kamala Das is an autobiographical book. Gender is constructed in the upper caste Kerala. Das protests against such conditioning of women and raises questions as regard to the roles assigned to the women in Kerala by society. She talks openly about homosexual relationship and marital loyalty and thus equips herself to challenge the traditional paradigms of the society ruled by man.\textsuperscript{19}

That Long Silence by Deshpande is a perfect example of feminism. Here in the novel, jaya is the female protagonist who follows her husband’s dictates like Sita and Savitri as they are her ideals. She hushes her voice, her likes, dislikes, her feelings, emotions, her love, her hatred; everything that a human being is capable of in order to keep her family happy and satisfied but the result is that she loses her identity which is also symbolized in the novel by the name ‘Suhasini’ given to her after marriage which means docile, submissive and humble.\textsuperscript{20}

This paper dwells on the female oppression in the novel \textit{The God of Small Things} of Arundhati Roy. Set in Ayemenem, the novel depicts the three generation of women namely Mammachi, Ammu who is Mammachi’s daughter and Rahel who in turn is Ammu’s daughter. Mammachi has herself been a victim of patriarchal set up of society and of male chauvinism, who suffered tragically at the hands of Pappachi her husband who used to beat her like a frantic devil. Ammu too has the same destiny in store for her. Like her mother she was a victim and her husband a victimizer who would not even hesitate to surrender his wife to his boss so that his own job and promotion can be safeguarded. Rahel is again an instance of same oppression. Her husband
leaves her and her own family members do not treat her well forcing her to seek refuge in incestuous love of her brother Estha.\textsuperscript{21}

Shashi Deshpande’s In The Country of Deceit presents a woman Devayani who enters into a pre-marital relationship with a married man. This union is not welcomed by the society. Being aware of this fact, the protagonist oscillates between what is wrong and right. Ultimately she decides her own path after resolving her problems. The paper tries to justify the title of the novel by analyzing the illicit relationship of Devayani and Ashok.\textsuperscript{22}

*Roots and Shadows* by Deshpande is a feminist text, dealing with the numerous situations of everyday life which lead to the stifling of voice of the female protagonist Indu. She is always taught to be submissive and docile. But she rebels against the traditional setup and marries Jayant, a man of her own choice. But even after marrying him, her troubles do not come to an end, rather they multiply.\textsuperscript{23}

Akka, the domineering figure of the family, has herself been the victim of marital rape, child marriage and the object of hatred of her in-laws. But still it is very astonishing that she treats Indu with the same kind of victimization of which she herself has been a part. Indu’s life is controlled from the onset by Akka. She is told that she has to remain in the boundaries and never transgress them as she is a woman. The novel is the expression of the articulation of women as Indu struggles hard to come out of such stifling environment.\textsuperscript{24}

This paper offers a nice study in some of the Indian women fiction writers although the main focus is Anita Desai. The novelist Anita Desai presents the existential dilemma through the ill-matched couples. Her concern is with the mental process of the protagonist, thus shifting the focus from external to internal world of the female protagonist. Kamala Markandaya has till now written ten novels and is one of the most reputed novelist in India. Her novels depict the cultural clash of east and west. Her main concern is with human relations. Ruth PavarJhabvala deals with the everyday situations and the problems of women in a very realistic way. Being the niece of Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Nayantara Sahgal has dealt with the rule of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. She has been drawn towards the ideology of Nehru. She depicts the conditions of India after independence. Shashi Despande is the recent voice in the list of women novelists. She has concerns with the middle class women. She has widely read feminist writers.\textsuperscript{25}
This paper makes an extensive reading of Shashi Deshpande’s novels, taking into consideration many of her novels. It studies these novels from the post colonial perspective and brings forth the gender politics which is quite inherent in man woman relationship where the word man is used to mean all human beings in general and the word woman is used to mean an altogether different class of human beings who are weak and docile. This paper deals with the issues of love, sex, extra-marital relationship, pre-marital relationship and the creative impulse of the women protagonists of Deshpande.\textsuperscript{26}

A Matter of Time shows the strong female character of Sumi whose husband Gopal walks out on her leaving her behind to face the situations of her life and of her daughters alone. But Sumi displays great courage and fortitude and instead of wallowing in self-pity she emerges as a strong character and starts working in a school to fend for herself. She is a potent character who chooses to move on in life.\textsuperscript{27}

Anita Nair is a genuine Indian Fiction writer concerned with the predicaments of women in Indian scenario. Her women characters come out with full vigour and vitality to encounter the stifling environment. She envisions a beautiful future of women by her optimistic attitude and by bestowing her female characters with undoubting courage.\textsuperscript{28}

The thrust of the paper is to deal with the problems which are concerned with the lives of women. This paper dwells on the novels of Bharathi Mukherjee like \textit{The Tree Bride}, \textit{Wife}, \textit{Desirable Daughters} etc. Mukherjee is a third world writer whose main concern is with female protagonists like her other counterparts but she is remarkably different from the other as while others deal with women’s problems in Indian scenario only she presents the dilemmas of Indian women when they migrate to foreign lands. The cultures clash and hence the problems of Indian women follow.\textsuperscript{29}

Kamala Das’ poetry is frank and confessional. She openly dares to reveal her pent up feelings of love and craving for sex. She knows that man can give only lust not spiritual love which a woman craves for. An act of love which should provide security and a feeling of union ends in frustration as a woman is oppressed even in that as a male considers the act of love to show his masculinity.\textsuperscript{30}
Imtiaz Dharker raises the flag of revolt against the orthodox Islamic culture which through its traditions and customs tries to subjugate women at each and every step. The veil or ‘Purdah’ is used in the Islamic religion to cover the body which is nothing but a means to assert that women are weak and need protection from the glaring lustful eyes of men. Dharker finds connotations of gender discrimination in the ‘purdah’ system which suffocates the body of every Muslim woman. She even through her poems describes the process by which a woman’s liberty is curtailed.\(^\text{31}\)

The main thrust of the paper is to bring out the misfortunes that women are beset with. The paper studies three novels of Shashi Deshpande: *Roots and Shadows*, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *The Binding Vine*. The themes of female subjugation in the form of marital rape and sexual abuse have been discussed.\(^\text{32}\)

The paper presents the mother daughter relationship in the novel *The Binding Vine* by Shashi Deshpande. This bond which is not noticeable in much of Indian fiction is a major concern in the writers like Chitra Banerjee, Manju Kapoor and Shahsi Deshpande. In the novel, mother-daughter relationship and its intricacies have been explored and brought forth. Urmi the protagonist is sad and sullen as she has lost her baby daughter but the pain mitigates as she comes in contact with women like Mira and Kalpana who have themselves been mute spectators of their own suffering at the hands of men in this male dominated structure of society. Through their pain she is able to have understanding of her own bond with her own mother Inni and her own role with her lost daughter.\(^\text{33}\)

*The Dark Holds No Terrors* has been investigated with a new insight. Saru has been termed as a modern woman who does not accept her traditional role and rebels against the tyranny of which she is a victim of. She is a new woman who is attributed with inner awakening and strives hard to improve her condition.\(^\text{34}\)

The paper does not pick up any one particular theme of the novel *A Matter of Time* rather it tries to attempt a critique of the whole novel. It discusses and explains the narrative technique that is used in the novel and picks up the issues of man-woman relationship, mother-daughter relationship, husband-wife relationship in the novel. A lengthy overview of the novel lets us know that women’s place in their relationship in terms to men is derogatory. Not only this even
mothers who are known to be very kind and full of love and affection for their children are seen quite in a bad light as per their relations to their daughters which can be seen in terms of Manorama and Kalyani in the novel.  

That Long Silence is a study in Jaya’s Character and the fortitude she displays. Despite the fact that she is humiliated and her individuality is hindered at a number of places, she is able to come out as a winner in the end of the novel by mustering up courage. The process of success and self-recognition is not that easy as she has to undergo much mental trauma.

Women are generally restricted by traditions and cultural prejudices of the society which hinder them to seek fulfillment of their emotional and psychological needs. Men, on the contrary, can transgress the bounds of society by establishing extra-marital relationship, and on one dares question him. Valsala, a sexually starved lady, crosses all limitations of traditional shackles and seeks fulfillment of her physical needs by establishing extra-marital relations with her neighbor in The Better Man. Anita Nair’s woman are so courageous, so bold, so audacious that they, in order to free themselves from the male domination, can go to any extent. Overturning the gender roles is not impossible in Anita Nair. Valsala not only enjoys sexual intimacy with her neighbor but also conspires with Sridharan, to murder her own husband Prabhakaranand actually commits the crimes, slicing his body into twelve parts.

Kamala Das was a bold writer. She depicted the pangs of loneliness and craving for her in her My Story, an autobiographical account of the poetess’ life, replete with untold episodes of suffering. She did not receive love and care when she was young and nor even she was married to Mr. Das at the mere age of fifteen. Her parents never cared for what was good for her. After marriage the life was like any Indian woman, a life of deprivation of love and depression. She craved for her and what she was given was lust. Even her mother was a mute victim. Whatever Das’ father said, she used to comply. But Das has opposed this tyranny as a lady of guts, she protested against all forms of injustice and oppression and The Story is the true representation of that.

The paper deals with the theme of marriage in Shashi Deshpande’s That Long Silence. Marriage is an institution which is meant to provide security, love and emotional harmony to both male and female. But the institution of marriage has failed dramatically in its aim. Instead of providing
love, it has only resulted in sex and lust without even an iota of love and emotional understanding. The novel by Deshpande *That Long Silence* clearly brings forth the various ways by which Jaya’s life has been subjugated, making her only an object rather a lifeless object. Marriage plays its disastrous role and Jaya is left aghast. She has to mould herself after marriage according to her husband’s likes and dislikes. Her creative urge remains pent up as her husband is not at all happy with whatever she writes, thus ultimately she has to shun writing. Not only Jaya but other women including Nayana and Jeeja are also victims in marriage.39

Kamala Das is known universally as a confessional writer who has been compared to writers like Sylvia Plath as she also writes in an acute confessional mode. Das’ poetry is replete with her own experiences which she from her unhappy marriage. Being unsatisfied and unhappy with the treatment given to her by her husband, she finds relived when she expresses her pent up feelings in a free outlet in the form of poetry. She was subjected to forceful sexual unison, thus her poems are mostly inspired by the theme of what true love and what sex is. ‘The Sunshine Cat’, ‘The Freaks’, ‘The Looking Glass’, ‘The Invitation’ and many more poems explore the same theme where very candidly she delineates the insatiable sexual hunger of the males for the female and the cleavage that rips the spiritual bonding apart.40